







MISS FERRIER'S NOVELS

DESTINY.

OR

THE CHIEF'S DAUGHTER

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'MARRIAGE' AND 'THE INHERITANCE'

'What's in a name?'—SHAKSPEARE

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IN TWO VOLUMES

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DESTINY.

CHAPTER I.

THE next day was Sunday—day of rest to the poor and the toil-worn, of weariness to the rich and the idle. Ah! little do they enter into the feelings of many who look forward to this day, as the day when even the “wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest,” as the day blessed and hallowed to those on whom rests, in its full force, the primeval command, “Six days shalt thou labour;” and which makes the Sabbath lovely in the sight

“Of blessed angels, pitying human cares ;”

as the day when heavenly truths are proclaimed alike to all, from the prince to the beggar; from the man of gray hairs standing on the threshold of the grave, to the young who have lately entered the arena of this life—there, in the house of God, “the rich and the poor meet together;” and there they are reminded of those impressive truths, so humbling to the haughty, so elevating to the lowly, “that the Lord is the maker of them all,” and that one day they shall stand before

His judgment-seat, without respect of persons, to "receive the reward of the deeds done in the body." On that day how many a sorrowing heart can more freely pour forth its griefs to that gracious ear which is ever open to the cry of the afflicted !

— “on every sea,
Which Europe’s navies plough—yes, in all lands
From pole to pole, or civilised, or rude,
People there are to whom the *Sabbath* morn
Dawns, shedding dews into their drooping hearts.”

The religious observances at Glenroy were entirely of a negative character ; there was neither music nor billiards on Sunday. Such of the family as chose went to church, and such as chose remained at home. Mrs. Macauley, except when Glenroy prevented her, was a regular attender of church, as she said even Mr. M'Dow’s preaching was better than none ; and Edith generally went to the afternoon service, which was performed in what Mr. M'Dow called English, the morning service being in Gaelic, for the benefit of the aborigines of the country. On this morning, the party having lingered over a late breakfast, were now severally settled at their occupations. Lady Elizabeth and Dr. Price were playing at *spilickins* ; Lady Waldegrave was drawing ; Madame Latour was sitting by her, alternately stringing small pearls, and laughing over a French play ; Edith was reading Milton ; Sir Reginald held a newspaper in his hand. Such was the position of the party, when Captain and Mrs. Malcolm of Inch Orran and their daughter were

announced. Edith hastened to meet them with her usual simple kindness of manner, heightened by the affection she ever retained for them, and then introduced them to her guests. Lady Elizabeth eyed them as if she had been short-sighted, and, having bowed an acknowledgment, resumed her game. Florinda's manners were what is called charming (in a superficial way) when she chose to show off; and she was all grace, ease, and suavity. Madame Latour loved company of any kind, and she closed her book, and went on stringing her pearls. There was something in the calmness and mildness of Mrs. Malcolm's manner peculiarly dignified and unaffected. She appeared wholly forgetful of self, and strong in the native elegant simplicity of a mind, which diffused itself over her whole bearing and deportment,—

“ Qui étoit de tout temps et de toutes modes.”

Of all the modifications of manner which are to be met with in society, perhaps the most generally pleasing is simplicity, even as that water is the purest which has no taste, that air the freshest which has no odour. Such was the impression which Mrs. Malcolm's manner generally produced on all whose hearts were still alive to the charms of nature, as even the most sophisticated unconsciously feel subdued beneath the bland influence of native goodness. Since the loss of her son, Mrs. Malcolm's manner had ever retained a still more pensive, chastened cast, than had formerly characterised it; and her pale brow, “tender and

gravely sweet," still wore "a look of days gone by." This was the first time she had seen Sir Reginald since his return, and for a moment the tide of sad recollection rushed over her heart as she thought, "Such as he is, might *my* Ronald now have been!" But soon the emotion died away beneath the habitual resignation of her soul; the cloud passed from her mild brow and pale cheek, as she regained her usual serenity.

Mrs. Malcolm was neither a bigot nor a zealot, but she could not avoid seeing how the day, so sacred in her estimation, was disregarded and degraded by those whom she was now among; and her eye rested more in sorrow than in anger on the frivolous occupations they were engaged in.

"It is so long since I have seen you, Mrs. Malcolm," said Edith, surveying her with looks of gladness, "that I scarcely know where to begin with my inquiries."

"It is indeed a long while since we have met," said Mrs. Malcolm; "but though I seldom go from home now, yet, had I known of the arrival of Lady Elizabeth Malcolm and Lady Waldegrave, I should have taken an earlier opportunity of waiting upon them;—not this day certainly, for I came for a different purpose; I could not think of passing your door without asking you to accompany us to your church. There is no service in our own to-day; and our good friend Mr. Stuart is to officiate in the absence of Mr. M'Dow."

"I shall go with much pleasure," said Edith ; "and perhaps others in company may also join the party."

"Certainly," said Lady Waldegrave, with one of her most winning looks ; "I shall be too happy to be allowed to accompany you."

"Going to church!" cried Lady Elizabeth, who, being tired of spilickins, here joined the conversation ; "very proper—I approve of going to church ; I think it quite right, absolutely necessary, for the sake of example to the lower orders of the people."

"If it is proper for the lower orders," said Mrs. Malcolm gently, "it must be equally so for the higher."

"By no means," replied Lady Elizabeth warmly, "it is quite a different thing ; it is very well known that in this country the common people do require to go to church ; it is different abroad, though even there they attend mass very regularly ; but then, you know, that is soon over, and they have a thousand innocent ways of amusing themselves and spending the day, which the people here have no idea of. They have operas and theatres and dancing, and all sorts of pretty, harmless amusements."

"It is many years since I was on the Continent," said Mrs. Malcolm, in the same gentle manner, "and therefore I am perhaps scarcely entitled to speak of the customs that prevail there now ; but at that time, I confess, my feelings were hurt at witnessing what appeared to me the profanation of a day associated in my mind with all that is solemn and sacred."

"Of course, on going from our own country, we

carry our prejudices along with us," said Sir Reginald, "and we are scandalised at seeing our neighbours with happy faces, on a day when we have always been accustomed to measure our piety by the length and solemnity of our own."

"Ah, excellent! excellent!" exclaimed Madame Latour; "que ce mot 'solemn' me fait frissonner!"

"I—why, yes, I don't think it is a good thing to be too solemn," observed Lady Elizabeth, with the air of a Solon; "it defeats the object—and—and—in short, I don't think it answers."

"I am sorry I should have used a word which has so many unpleasing ideas attached to it," said Mrs. Malcolm sweetly; "but, in my mind, solemnity is not necessarily associated with gloom or melancholy. There is a solemn stillness in the air of the Sabbath which conveys to me ideas of the most pleasurable kind. It seems to combine all the tranquillity and repose of the night with the light and gladness of the day."

"Mais pourquoi you forbidded dans cette contrée toute démonstration de joie?" inquired Madame Latour.

"I know no demonstrations of rational joy that are forbidden," replied Mrs. Malcolm; "the mere excess of animal spirits certainly does not harmonise with the day given for nobler purposes. But there may be, and I am sure there is, much quiet, heartfelt, homefelt happiness on that day. I know no more pleasurable sight than that of our own poor people

in their clean dresses, with cheerful though sedate faces, assembling together to hear the glad tidings, which tell them of peace and hope and love."

"Mais la danse et la musique, par exemple, vous les regardez comme des péchés mortels—chez nous, elles sont les démonstrations de notre joie ; de notre reconnaissance, de notre amour de Dieu," and Madame Latour raised her eyes in a pretended ecstasy of devotion.

"Where such feelings are truly produced, and bring forth corresponding fruits, we should certainly be cautious how we condemn the means," replied Captain Malcolm ; "as some one has well said, 'virtuous action is all the real worth of intelligent being ;' but in this land we have no reason to expect that music and dancing should lead to the knowledge of God and the practice of piety. Even splendid rites have been found both useless and pernicious, in alluring the mind away from the doctrines and precepts of the Gospel, which are addressed to the heart and the understanding, not the senses."

"Surely every one must allow nothing can be more effectual in kindling devotional feeling than fine music," said Sir Reginald.

"Undoubtedly," replied Captain Malcolm, "fine music is the very luxury of devotion ; but it is one that is far beyond the reach of the mass of the people. Where could our poor Highlanders procure fine music?"

"You forget the bagpipe, and its accompaniment the whisky bottle," said Sir Reginald sarcastically.

"The fiddle and the *vin du pays* may be more refined modes of enjoyment," said Captain Malcolm ; "but refinement of taste does not necessarily imply corresponding improvement in morals. I have not, indeed, lived long enough in a Catholic country to be altogether a fair judge of the practical effects of the Romish religion on the morals of the people ; but of one thing I am very sure, that the *sincere* followers of that religion enjoy much less liberty, spiritual and temporal, than we do. Were we to reckon up the number of holidays, saints' days, fasts, vigils, penances, prayers, etc. etc., from one year's end to the other, I suspect it would be found that a much larger portion of time is devoted to religious observances amongst Catholics than Protestants. Were we, therefore, to annul, or even curtail, our one day in seven, little or nothing would remain to remind us of the tie subsisting between God and His creatures."

"That is very good," exclaimed Lady Elizabeth. "Penances are, to be sure, shocking things ; and we Protestants ought, as Mr. Malcolm says, to oppose them by every means in our power—and we ought also to set a good example to the lower orders. I shall go to church myself to-day"—with an air of dignified virtue—"and if you will allow me, I will take a seat in your carriage," to Captain Malcolm, whom she had just discovered to be a very fine-looking, gentlemanly man ; and being a great enthusiast in beauty, his looks were at once a passport to her good graces.

The offer was of course accepted. The first carriage

drove off, while the other for Florinda and Edith was getting ready. Edith had been hurt at the slighting way in which Reginald had spoken of the religious observances of their country; for although she herself entered but little into the true spirit of Christianity, she nevertheless possessed that reverence for its institutions and symbols which, with many, passes for religion itself.

When the carriage drove up, Sir Reginald was on the hall-steps ready to hand Lady Waldegrave and Edith in. Madame Latour, being a Catholic, of course did not accompany them.

"I flattered myself you would have escorted Florinda and me to church, Reginald," said Edith reproachfully.

"You forget that I am half a Catholic," said he, smiling.

Edith gave an unconscious look of affright from him to Madame Latour, who was standing also on the steps. Reginald seemed to read what was passing in her mind, and the careless, scornful smile he gave in return at once reassured her; while he added, "That is according to the notions of Presbyterians. But, however, if you are not afraid, after what has passed, to admit such a reprobate within the walls of your kirk, I shall join you there, Edith. I shall take the cut across Benvarloch, and be there as soon as you."

"Is it possible, then, to walk to church?" inquired Lady Waldegrave.

"Quite possible for Highlanders, such as Reginald and I," answered Edith; "but quite impossible, I should imagine, for you, Florinda."

"What a stimulus that word 'impossible' is," said Lady Waldegrave, "especially when one knows it is quite possible, as I am resolved to prove. How I love to overcome possible impossibilities! Come, if I should fag by the way, some of your good Highland fairies will, I am sure, take pity on me, and bring me a pair of golden pattens, or some such aid as will enable me to climb with perfect ease to the very pinnacle of your mountain tops." And, in spite of all remonstrance, her Ladyship persisted in walking. The carriage was therefore dismissed empty, and the party set out.

Sir Reginald, as a matter of course, offered an arm to each of his companions; but Lady Waldegrave coldly declined, and he did not repeat the offer. There was something so whimsical and capricious in Florinda's behaviour that Edith could not fathom it. She had volunteered, even insisted upon taking a long walk with a person from whom she yet would not accept the most common act of civility! What could be the meaning of such mutual, unvarying coldness, and even dislike?

Lady Waldegrave might have read what was passing in Edith's mind on her artless yet eloquent countenance; but Lady Waldegrave was one of those who are too much engrossed by self to pay much attention to the thoughts and feelings of others, unless when

exacting a tribute of admiration or adulation. For a considerable part of the way the road lay through the beautiful and extensive pleasure-grounds, where ever-changing landscapes of wild alpine scenery, rocks and woods, knolls and dells, blue lake and gliding river, alternately mingled with the softer features of culture and ornament—

“The pomp of groves, and garniture of fields,”

presenting a constant succession of grand and lively pictures. But soon, to the rich, picturesque, and ornamented scenery of the home domain, succeeded the purple moor with its gray stones, the dreary glen, the rugged mountain, and the rude torrent. The day was close and warm and sunless; an unvarying gray atmosphere surrounded them, and seemed to shed a “browner horror” over the lone valley and the gloomy mountain. There were none of those magical effects of light and shade to enliven the dull bosom of the one, or irradiate the dark brow of the other; and, as has been truly said, sunshine alone fills with beauty the land of mountains, and imparts to every feature a grandeur and a grace which sinks into insipidity the riches and the beauty of the fairest champaign.

It seemed as if the gloom of nature had communicated itself to the spirits of those who now traversed the solitary scenes, themselves almost as silent. Lady Waldegrave was pensive and abstracted. Sir Reginald was almost wholly silent, as if absorbed in some

strong, concentrated feeling. Edith was surprised and mortified at the indifference, and even inattention, with which Florinda regarded the sublime scenery around them. As they climbed the steep side of the mountain, they sometimes stopped to recover breath; and on one occasion, as they looked down from the almost dizzy height on which they stood, to the dreary glen below, Edith, pointing to a wretched and almost imperceptible hovel, with its peat-stack and its potato patch, said, "Look there, Florinda,—that is a human dwelling; and, do you know, I am so piqued at the indifference with which you regard our magnificent Benvarloch, that I could almost wish you were a dweller there for a season, that you might learn to look up to it with proper respect and awe. But I daresay the bare idea of such a thing has answered my purpose, and made you tremble already!"

"By no means," replied Lady Waldegrave calmly; "mournful and isolated as that dwelling appears, I can conceive circumstances in which it might be the abode of happiness and delight."

"Under what strange circumstances could that possibly be, Florinda?" inquired Edith, smiling at the idea of the delicate, refined, luxurious, fastidious Lady Waldegrave deeming it possible to exist in such a place, under any circumstances. Lady Waldegrave smiled too, but it was with something of scorn, as she answered in a low voice, but sufficiently loud for Reginald (who stood a little apart) to hear—"Love

might transform even that wretched hut into a bower of Paradise."

"And transform the peats and heather into amaranths and roses?" said Edith, laughing.

"Yes; Love has wrought greater miracles than that," replied Florinda pensively.

"Not *true* love," said Edith in a low voice, and blushing as she spoke; "there can be no illusion there."

"It is evident you have never loved," returned Lady Waldegrave; "if the love was pure and fervent and sincere—if, in short, it *was* love, there would be no illusion in the matter;" and she repeated, with much grace and beauty, these lines from Garcilazo de la Vega:—

"Por ti el silencio de la selva umbrosa,
Por ti la esquividad y apartamiento
Del solitario monte me agradaba."¹

She stopped, then said, "What follows is so beautiful, I must repeat it," and, with a sigh, she resumed:

"Por ti la verde hierba el fresco viento
El blanco lirio, y colorada rosa
Y dulce primavera descaba.
Ay! quanto me engañaba!
Ay quan diferente era

"Through thee, the silence of the shaded glen,
Through thee, the horror of the lonely mountain,
Pleased me no less than the resort of men,
The breeze, the summer wood, and lucid fountain."
•

Y quan de otra manera
Lo que, en tu falso pecho se escondier!"¹

Edith's feelings were so delicate, and her manners so simple, that the impassioned, yet sophisticated style of Lady Waldegrave's sentiments, brought forward, too, so unnecessarily, struck her as something strange, and she thought to herself, "Surely she has never loved, or she could not thus proclaim it!" She stole a glance at Reginald to see whether his feelings accorded with hers, but he had turned abruptly away, as she imagined, in scorn.

After standing a few minutes in silence, Lady Waldegrave said, "I find I must rest before I can proceed. Here is a charming *banc de gazon*," as she seated herself on one of the few green spots the mountain side, covered as it was with rock and heather, afforded.

"We must not rest long, or else we shall be too late for church," said Edith.

"Why, to own the truth," said Lady Waldegrave languidly, "I fear I must relinquish the attempt of getting to church; I am so fatigued, I feel quite unable to proceed any farther; taunt me as you will, Edith, I am at your mercy."

¹ "The purple rose, white lily of the lake,
Were sweet for thy sweet sake !

For thee the fragrant primrose dropped with dew
Was wish'd when first it blew !
Ah, how completely was I in all this
Myself deceiving ! Oh the different part
That thou wert acting,

The traitor in thy heart!"

"I won't be so cruel as to exult over your defeat," said Edith, smiling; "but you must allow me just to remind you that I predicted what has come to pass, without even pretending to the second-sight. And now, what is to be done?—Come, Reginald, let us hold a council of war."

"I am a bad counsellor," said he coldly, and without lifting his eyes from the ground.

"Then, if I am to be commander-in-chief, I think the best thing I can do is to despatch you for my pony, to take Florinda home."

"Oh no, no—not for the world," cried Florinda; "I should die of fright were I to attempt to descend this dreadful mountain on horseback."

"But my pony is so safe and sure-footed, and, besides, Reginald would lead it down the hill for you, as he has often done for me."

"Pray, don't ask me to do anything so hazardous," said Lady Waldegrave pettishly.

"Then we must all sit quietly here till you are sufficiently rested to return home," said Edith; "at least my head can suggest no brighter expedient."

"But it makes me quite wretched to think that I should be the means of keeping you from church. I know you are very desirous of being there; I heard you say so to Mrs. Malcolm."

"I should certainly have liked very well to be at church," said Edith; "but the disappointment is nothing; don't think of it."

"But indeed I must. I cannot bear that you

should lose any pleasure upon my account ; rather than detain you, I will try, if possible, to make it out, *coute qui coute.*" And she attempted to rise, but Edith would not allow it, and insisted that she should not stir till perfectly recovered.

"But how shall I manage with mamma ?" resumed Lady Waldegrave. "She will be so miserable and so fluttered if I don't appear, that she will make quite a *scène* at church."

"If Lady Waldegrave will honour me with her commands," said Sir Reginald, in a constrained tone of civility, "I shall be happy to be the bearer of them."

"Oh ! that will do," cried Edith. "Reginald will go to church, and account for your absence to Lady Elizabeth ; and we can return at our leisure, when you feel disposed to move."

"And leave us here in this frightful solitude, by ourselves !" exclaimed Florinda. "Surely, Edith, you cannot be serious !"

"I am indeed," said Edith, laughing. "Unless the mountains were to fall upon us, I see no other danger to apprehend. I should not mind being here quite alone."

"Oh, shocking !" exclaimed Florinda, shuddering ; "then what a coward you must think me !"

"Then, what is to be done ?" said Edith. "There is no human being near us, to send in either direction."

"I must try to make it out myself, then, it seems," said Florinda, with a languid, oppressed air; and then

she attempted to rise, but sank back, as if quite unable ; and, in a faint voice, "Indeed, I feel it impossible, without a long rest ; and yet I cannot rest, when I think of the state of nervous excitement mamma will be thrown into, when she misses me."

"There is another proposal I would make," said Edith, in a hesitating tone. "But——"

"But what?" inquired Lady Waldegrave.

Edith still hesitated, as she thought of the mutual coldness, and even aversion, her companions manifested towards each other ; then, in a low voice, and with a little confusion, she said, "I would offer to go to church myself, only I thought, perhaps, you would dislike being left with only Reginald."

Lady Waldegrave coloured, and a gleam of pleasure shot from her eyes as she cast them down. "Dear Edith, since you are *so* kind, *so very* kind," said she, pressing her hand with animation, then relapsing into her former languid tone—"This is no time for ceremony, and I shall not much mind it. To be sure, if it could have been otherwise arranged, it would have been better ; but I believe that is the only practicable scheme. Even the presence of an enemy I should feel a protection in this region of horror."

"An enemy, Florinda! Ah, for shame. You surely do not consider Reginald as such?" asked Edith in a low voice.

Lady Waldegrave made no reply.

"How I wish I saw you friends—such friends," added Edith, blushing, turning her cheek to whisper

in Florinda's ear—"as a sister ought to be with—a brother."

The caress which accompanied this avowal was not returned; but Edith's own confusion rendered her unconscious of Florinda's, and, hastily rising, she called, "Sir Reginald, I am going to walk to church, and Lady Waldegrave trusts herself to your protection—you will see her safe home."

She had expected a remonstrance from her lover as to her undertaking the walk alone—no opposition, however, was made, but an expression of deep emotion crossed his features as he stammered out a few inaudible words of acquiescence. A vague, undefinable sensation passed through Edith's heart; the feeling had neither name nor substance—it was a mere shapeless shadow that fell upon her imagination, and she hastened to dispel it. Yet she lingered, she knew not why, ere she took her departure, perhaps in the hope that Reginald would yet interfere to prevent her. But he did not; he followed her a few steps, as if he would have recalled her; then turned abruptly round, and leaning against a piece of projecting rock, with his head resting on his arm, remained in deep though silent agitation.

CHAPTER II.

“FLORINDA!” at length he exclaimed, in a voice of emotion ; but Lady Waldegrave made no reply.

“Florinda!” he repeated, in a tone of deeper agitation ; but still Lady Waldegrave remained immovable.

“Florinda!” he cried, still more passionately, “will you not hear me ? answer me ?”

For a few moments Lady Waldegrave seemed as if struggling with her feelings, then said, “There was a time when I would have answered, when I *did* answer, to that call from you—that time is past.”

“And you now hate—despise me ?” cried he. Florinda was silent.

“You think me false—faithless !” he exclaimed, with increasing vehemence ; “I know—I know you do.”

Lady Waldegrave made no answer, and there was another pause.

“Tell me, only tell me, that you acquit me of cold-blooded perfidy ; that you do not think me the base, heartless villain——” his agitation choked his utterance.

"I know not what to think," said Lady Waldegrave haughtily; "but I feel I degrade myself in thus allowing you an opportunity of uttering such language; nor would I have done so, but that it was necessary, ere I leave this, I should see you alone. You have refused the explanation I sought by Madame Latour, with regard to the picture I committed to your charge; you will not, you dare not as a gentleman, refuse to restore it to me when I demand it myself."

Sir Reginald replied by opening his collar, and discovering the picture suspended round his neck. "Never while I live will I part from it," he cried; "it is my all of happiness!"

"This is too humiliating!" said Florinda indignantly, and rising as if to move away; but he seized her hand, and caused her to be seated.

"Wretched and undone as I am," he cried, "hateful as I am to myself, still, to be odious in your eyes is misery greater than I can bear. Oh, Florinda, could you but know the struggles of my heart—the sicken-ing mixture of hopelessness and hope! Could you conceive the thousandth part of the anguish I have endured, that I still endure, and for you!"

A slight wave of the head, and a curl of the lip, indicated Lady Waldegrave's incredulity.

"You do not—you dare not doubt my truth, Florinda!" cried he, starting from the ground, where he had cast himself.

"Have I not cause?"

"No, no ; I have deceived myself—I have deceived another—but I have never deceived you. Nay, hear me, Florinda, hear me!"

"To what purpose? We are now mere acquaintances; henceforth let us be still less—let us be strangers."

"Yet you once loved me—at least you suffered me to indulge that hope; but 'tis better that it should not be so. Tell me, only tell me, that you never loved me; say, then, Florinda, oh, in mercy say that you love me no longer! that you hate, abhor me!" and he gasped as he spoke; his brow was contracted as in agony, and his eyes seemed as if they would start from their sockets.

A faint blush rose to Lady Waldegrave's cheek as she replied, "You judge of my feelings by your own, it seems. Mine change not so easily."

"Oh, Florinda, dearest, most beloved!" and he pressed her hand to his lips, to his heart, and both were silent for some moments; when, suddenly dropping it, he wildly exclaimed, "Why do you suffer me to touch that hand, Florinda? it never can be mine now—never! Florinda"—and he spoke in a tone of deep, but suppressed agony—"Florinda, I will not conceal it, you are dearer to me than life itself. I never did love, I never can love, another as I love you—to madness, to distraction; and yet—and yet"—and the cold drops hung round his brow—"I am on the eve of marriage with another!"

Uttering an exclamation, Lady Waldegrave would

have risen from her seat, but, starting up, he withheld her.

“Not till you have heard all. Hear me, in mercy hear me, Florinda—by Heaven you shall! I will not suffer you to believe me a monster of perfidy!”—Then softening—“Florinda, on my knees I implore you to hear me! Erring—guilty as I may be, you shall acquit me at least of premeditated deception. I have acted rashly, wildly, madly, but not basely!”

Lady Waldegrave’s only reply was turning her head haughtily away.

“Do you then refuse to hear me?” asked Reginald, in a voice of forced composure.

“To what purpose should I hear you? I have already heard too much—I have heard myself insulted.”

“Insulted!—oh, Florinda, you whom I adore, worship——”

“And have *deceived*,” interrupted Lady Waldegrave emphatically.

“Florinda, you must, you *shall* hear me!” cried he firmly, seizing both her hands in his. “You shall hear all, and then condemn me if you will. A thousand times I have attempted to write to you—to lay open my whole heart to you—to throw myself on your pity—to implore you to fly from me—to forget me—but in vain; where could I find words to express the agonies of my soul? agonies which have made it easier for me to feign hatred than to assume indifference towards you.” He paused, as if to regain

composure, but, in a hurried, agitated manner, resumed :

“I need not tell you that from the first moment I beheld you at Naples I loved you—that you well know. From that time I lived but in your sight—I saw only you, heard only you ; for weeks I lived in a dream—a delirium ; everything was forgotten, or, if remembered, remembered only with indifference or disgust. And yet, at that very time, when my whole soul was yours, I confess—with shame and misery unspeakable I confess—my faith was plighted to another ! Bear with me, Florinda, but for a few short minutes, and you shall hear all. It was done in the weakness and ignorance of boyhood. I had mistaken friendship, relationship, affection, for love. There was my misfortune—my crime, if you will.”

“No,” cried Florinda, while her cheek glowed with a deeper carnation—“that was not your offence. Had you stopped there—but——”

“To dare to love you—to tell you that I loved you—yes, I allow that was presumption—frenzy—fettered as I was ; but at least you will do me the justice to acknowledge that the avowal of my love was forced from me by circumstances—and that even then, when I poured out the feelings of my heart before you, I did not conceal from you that an obstacle then stood in the way of my happiness ; I could not bear to name it to you ; but it was one I flattered myself I should be able to remove. I trusted that time and absence would have wrought the same

change in *her* that had taken place in me, and that the task would be an easy one to break the ties we so prematurely formed. It has not proved so ; she loves me still—still ! Ah ! do not scorn her affection, Florinda ; it is, I am sure, such as she is herself, tender and sincere. But even had it been less so, even were it far otherwise, from the situation in which I am now placed, to retreat on my part would be infamy. By the death of her brother, I am now unhappily heir to the princely inheritance of her father. All that he has must be mine. I owe him much—he has been a father to me through life. To renounce this alliance would be worse than death to *him*—it would be eternal disgrace to *me*! that is the only price I cannot—*will not*—pay for you. I would have sacrificed myself a thousand times rather than have met you again as we have now met—and then to part for ever !”

“ And she for whom you make this sacrifice accepts it. She values it, perhaps, the more for what it costs,” said Florinda coldly.

“ No—oh no ; she is ignorant of all.”

“ So blind ! yet you think she loves you ?”

“ I am *sure* she does.”

Lady Waldegrave moved her head incredulously, and a slight smile of scorn wreathed her lip.

“ You doubt, Florinda !” exclaimed Reginald, anxiously regarding her. She was silent.

“ Tell me,” cried he, still more earnestly, “ have you any reason to believe—to suspect—that Edith ——” He stopped in extreme perturbation.

"Loves you as a brother, a friend, as a companion, a playfellow, a cousin ; in all these relations I do believe you *are* loved."

For a moment, whether from vanity or surprise, Sir Reginald looked almost displeased ; but in another instant his eyes sparkled with renewed fire.

"If it should be so!" he exclaimed eagerly. "And yet—and yet—from her own lips I had the avowal—timid and sensitive as she is, she gave me the spontaneous assurance of her love. Ah, Florinda, even she dared to say more than ever you have said!"

"Unjust! ungenerous!" said Lady Waldegrave, crimsoning, as she cast her eyes on the ground.

"Florinda, dearest, forgive me ! But were it as you suppose, you might yet be mine !" And again he pressed her hand to his lips, and a long silence ensued ; each seemed as though they feared to break the spell which blinded their hearts and senses to the self-delusions which all unregulated minds and selfish spirits so passionately love to indulge.

Suddenly a dark shadow fell upon them, and looking up they perceived (with what feelings may be imagined) the huge person of Mr. M'Dow actually bending over them, with outstretched neck, and eyes and mouth open to their utmost extent, Amailye hanging by the bridle on his arm. Sir Reginald's eyes flashed fire, and he cast a glance at the intruder, which, for a moment, caused even his obtuse nature to quail, and he instinctively retreated a few steps, while he said, affecting great delicacy of speech, "I

hope I have not been guilty of any intrusion ; if I hadn't met Miss Edith, who told me what has happened, I would really have taken this for a courting-scene—hoch, hoch, ho !” Then, losing his bodily fears, he advanced, and seating himself almost close to Lady Waldegrave, he took off his hat, pulled his pocket-handkerchief out of it, and began to wipe his forehead, while Amailye cropped the sweet mountain herbage.

Florinda instantly rose, and with her cheeks in a glow, said—“I am now sufficiently rested, Sir Reginald, to be able to return ;” and with a slight bend of the head to Mr. M'Dow, she walked away.

Reginald, conscience-stricken and embarrassed, not daring to offer her his arm, accompanied her in silence. But they had not proceeded many steps before Mr. M'Dow was thundering after them, and pushing forward, said, as he extended one of his great elbows (Amailye hanging on the other), “Will your Ladyship do me the favour to take my arm ?”

In an instant Reginald came round from the other side, with looks of lightning, and placing himself between Florinda and the enormous elbow, drew her arm within his, and in a voice of stifled fury, said, “We shall only impede your progress, sir ; had you not better mount your horse, and proceed ?”

“I thank you, sir,” returned the impregnable M'Dow ; “but I'm in no particular hurry.”

“I beg pardon, sir ; but I should have supposed you were,” said Sir Reginald, still rising in his boiling

indignation. "It is rather unusual, is it not, for clergymen in this country to be travelling during church service?"

"It is so, certainly," returned Mr. M'Dow, with perfect composure; "you are quite right, it is certainly not quite orthodox. But there are circumstances in my case which I think would satisfy even the Presbytery, if the worst should come to the worst, and I should be brought before it at your instance, Sir Reginald—hoch, hoch, ho! But the fact is, that, although at this moment I can't say I'm in no particular hurry (as I go but a short distance to-day), yet I must confess I'm nevertheless in haste; for, since the truth must be told, I'm in no less than wedding haste. My fair lady has done me the honour to fix Wednesday, the 29th, for the happy day, which is rather sooner than was originally proposed, in consequence of the arrival of Mr. Reddie of Manchester, and his family, to the marriage. Mr. Reddie is the lady's maternal uncle, and is to officiate as her fawther upon the occasion, so it would be a terrible business if all was *ready* but the bridegroom—hoch, ho, ho! I was to have taken the steamboat to-morrow morning, but hearing last night that the boiler of the Aberdeen boat had burst, and very near killed a passenger, I began to think that they were not very chancy, and that I would be better on the back of my powney than in the boiler of a steamboat—hoch, hoch, ho! So I just kept *incog.* at the manse, and slipped away at a time when I thought there was little chance of

meeting anybody. I merely go as far as my friend Auchnahashnish's this afternoon, and there I'll catch the coach as it passes to-morrow, which will take me to Glasgow the same evening. And now I hope you'll allow, Sir Reginald, that this is an extreme case. Only conceive, if any mischance had come over the boat, and I in it, what a dreadful situation for the lady—what an awful predicament for a person of feeling and refinement!"

To this dread anticipation no answer was returned, and the party proceeded; Mr. M'Dow expatiating on the advantages and disadvantages of steamboats, their cheapness and facility, their dangers and disagreeableness, till Sir Reginald impatiently interrupted him by saying, "This road, sir, is ill calculated for so many persons; I would recommend you to move forward."

"The road *is* a little narrow, to be sure," returned Mr. M'Dow, "but I can fall back a step or two, and at the same time enjoy the advantages of the good company I have been so fortunate as to fall in with; besides it's rather steep for my beast, who's not just so sure-footed as she has been, and so I prefer walking; not that I'm just so encumbered as the poor Highland postman, who said he could not get on, because he was sair taigled with a horse!—hoch, ho, ho!"—but the hills only echoed Mr. M'Dow's laugh, as he met with no interruption from either of his companions. Sir Reginald was chafing in fiery silence, and Lady Waldegrave's bonnet concealed her face.

But, still bent on making himself agreeable, he pushed close up to Lady Waldegrave, again offering his arm. "Your Ladyship appears much fatigued ; had you not better accept additional help ?" A cold and haughty bow was the only answer vouchsafed. Nothing daunted, Mr. M'Dow went on—"We have not here the conveniences that you have in foreign parts," he continued ; "I'm told they carry the ladies over the mountains in sedan-chairs, and that puts me in mind of what happened to a countryman of ours, Sir Reginald, when he first went to Edinburgh. He had been invited to a fine party, and he thought he would treat himself with a chair for gentility's sake. But, lo and behold ! the chair wanted the bottom ; the chairmen were in a hurry, and away they trotted, up one street and down another, the poor gentleman's body in the chair, and his feet racing away through the dirt ; quo' he, 'An 'twerena for the honour o' the thing, 'troth I wad ha'e preferred plain walking'—hoch, hoch, ho !' In this manner Mr. M'Dow went on, beguiling, as he thought, the weariness of the way to his companions, whose silence he attributed solely to fatigue.

There was no shaking off the minister. As there was a near cut to Auchnahashnish through Glenroy grounds, he kept in close contact till within a short distance of the Castle, when, with many regrets and apologies at not being able to pay his respects to his worthy pawtron, he made his parting speech :—"Well, Sir Reginald, I hope you will soon give me an opportunity of doing as I am going to be done by ; and no

doubt, my Lady, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you officiating as best maid on the occasion." Then mounting his Amalye, he rode off.

Intolerable as his presence had been, his absence was scarcely less supportable in the present state of the parties, and his departure was followed by a silence. It was not till they had almost reached the house that Reginald was impelled to break it, when, in an agitated voice and manner, he said, "Florinda, I have still much to say—you must hear me—you must do me justice—I cannot live under the sense of your displeasure—of your contempt," he added, as she withdrew her arm from his, saying coldly, "Excuse me; I am too much fatigued to resume a subject which had perhaps better never have been revived."

"I am sick of life!" he exclaimed passionately. "Do not, then, drive me to desperation! Promise me, at least, that you will again hear me!"

"Perhaps—another time—not now," said Lady Waldegrave, as they entered the house; and she hastily quitted him, aware that she had left him in a state of mind which would not allow him to rest till he was again at her feet.

CHAPTER III.

LADY ELIZABETH'S natural anxieties might possibly have been suppressed at the opera, but were not to be restrained at church. And after having for some time disturbed the devotions of the congregation by her fidgeting and whispering, she at length left the church, accompanied by Edith, who was obliged to order the carriage and return home with her. On arriving there, they learnt that the object of all this solicitude had gone to her own apartment much fatigued, and thither her Ladyship repaired, while Edith obeyed a summons to her father. She found the Chief seated in his gouty chair, with no very benign aspect; Benbowie slumbering beside him; and Mrs. Macauley fronting them with a serious-looking book in her hand.

"This is a pretty way I'm treated," was his salutation to Edith. "I've sent at least ten times this last hour for Reginald or you, and it seems it's only now you think it worth while to come! I don't believe there's one of my own hounds that's neglected in the manner I am. Where's your cousin? Where's Reginald? I ask, where is he?" Edith (who had seen

her father just before going to church) hastened to explain matters, but the explanation was received with high disdain.

"You've been all very ill employed in wandering after preachers, and leaving me here with no other company than these two creatures," pointing to Benbowie and Mrs. Macauley; "the one squirting tobacco in my face all day, the other deaving me with her impertinent trash of sermons."

"Oh now, Glenroy! how can you speak that way, when you know the only sermon I've read to you to-day is that beautiful discourse on meekness by"—

"And what the plague have I to do with discourses on meekness?" stamping with his crutch as he spoke.

"That's true—very true, on my conscience," said Benbowie, roused by the stroke of the crutch.

"Meekness!" rejoined Glenroy; "hah, a pretty-like thing, to be sure, for a Highland Chief; he would cut a pretty figure with meekness indeed! Meekness—meekness?—meanness!"

"Ah, Glenroy, for all that, I wish I saw you clothed in meekness!" sighed Mrs. Macauley.

"Clothed in meekness! pretty-like clothing, indeed, for a Highland Chief!" cried Glenroy furiously.

"Deed, then, Glenroy, I'm thinking, after all, Highland Chiefs are but human craaturs," said Mrs. Macauley, looking as if the idea had for the first time entered her mind.

"You really—there's no bearing this! I desire,

Molly Macauley, you'll take that methodistical-looking book out of my sight this moment, and never let me see or hear of it again. These puritanical books are enough to drive a man out of his senses. I hate meekness! by Jove, if I had not the patience of Job, I would not submit to this! Benbowie, ring the bell—ring it louder. It's very hard that I can't get a word of my own nephew in my own house."

Benbowie, now roused from his slumber, followed Mrs. Macauley and her volume of sermons out of the room, as Reginald entered. Edith was struck with the paleness and dejection of his countenance, on which the recent traces of agitation were still visible; and a wild, nameless fear again darted through her mind.

"Come away, Reginald," cried Glenroy, extending his hand to him, "come away, it's long since I've seen you; but, I know, it's not your fault, it's these foolish women that take you up—but you should not mind them, Reginald. And when's that English set going away, Edith—what's keeping them here all this time? If they expect to see any more of me, they're much mistaken, I can tell them. My foot shall not cross my own room door till I've seen their backs turned; but let them go or stay, don't you trouble your head about them, Reginald. I see you're quite done out, dancing attendance on them; but I must put a stop to that, and the best way to do it is to get you married to Edith, and then you can give all your time and attention to me. Where are you going,

Edith? Come back this moment—going away at the very time I'm settling your marriage, you silly thing!"

Edith, with her face in a glow, stopped irresolute; but, in her confusion, saw not the increasing paleness and look of agony which stole over Reginald's features.

"You know I'm to have the woods thinned for her portion, and I'll ride there some day with you myself, Reginald, and you shall have out the black mare. It was a good one that Lord what-do-you-call-him having the impudence to ask me to part with that mare. Norman's mare! he would have had Edith too; but I never would give her to any man living but yourself, Reginald. But this is the 25th of the month—is it not? Well, let it be in the course of the next month, and that gives time enough to get all her trumpery, and to invite the county to it. The sooner the better—and then, Reginald, we'll part no more,"—with a fervent shake of the hand. Much more of the same sort followed, while Sir Reginald, with a sick and an aching heart, articulated some indistinct words, which, however, passed very well with Glenroy. At length he was liberated by the sound of the dressing-bell.

Late and tardily the party assembled in the drawing-room. Edith naturally shunned the possibility of a *tête-à-tête* with her lover, after what had passed in her hearing about the marriage; and he, as may be supposed, was not more desirous of meeting with

one the very sight of whom spoke daggers to his conscience.

Dinner had been announced some time before Lady Elizabeth made her appearance, which she at last did in her morning dress, and with visible marks of business and bustle in her deportment.

“Excuse me, my dear child,” said she to Edith, “for coming to dinner *en déshabillé*; but since I saw you, I have been so hurried I really scarcely know what I am about. Florinda—(who, by-the-bye, begs that you will excuse her appearing at dinner, as she still feels rather *abattu*, from the wretched walk she had; but Dr. Price assures me a little rest is all that is necessary)—has had an express from the Duchess of Porchester, who, it seems, is come with the Duke to his shooting-box, entreating us to go to her immediately. Florinda begged I would show her note to you, that you may see how impossible it is to refuse. There are no secrets in it; I shall read it aloud:—

“‘MY DEAR LADY WALDEGRAVE—I have this instant learnt you are at Glenroy, consequently not more than thirty-six miles from us, which, according to Highland geography, is about the same distance as between Piccadilly and St. James’s. Judge, then, of my impatience to have you here. Do oblige me, and come *immediately*; I have a very *particular* reason for wishing you to be here before the 27th. I cannot express how much you will gratify me by coming. We have a perfect host of your adorers here, and

now that they are tired of shooting grouse, I fear they will take to shooting themselves, unless you come to us ; and then, perhaps, they will only shoot one another. I *know* you will come, dearest dear Lady Waldegrave, and oblige your affectionate friend,

“ ‘CHARLOTTE PORCHESTER.

“ ‘As horses are not quite so plenty as heather in this *charming* country, the Duke begs me to say he will send his to meet you at the (I can’t spell the word) ferry opposite Glenroy, wind and weather serving, to-morrow, as they surely will, to oblige *you* and *me* and half-a-dozen dying swains and desperate inamoratas. This will save you about a thousand miles, more or less. Of course when I say *you*, I include Lady Elizabeth and Madame Latour, and all near and dear to you. I enclose a billet to Sir Reginald, although, I suppose, if reports speak truth, I need scarcely hope he will leave his *fiancée*—but why should not she come too ? Tell Miss Malcolm this, with all sorts of proper speeches on the occasion.’ ”

“Ah ha, Sir Reginald ! thereby hangs a tale which we must have some day,” cried Lady Elizabeth, forgetting, in the exhilaration of her spirits, all previous antipathies felt and expressed. “That’s just as it should be,” glancing from him to Edith ; “but I understand,” nodding her head, “I shall keep your secret, though you scarcely deserve it, for having kept it so well yourselves—ha, ha, ha ! But in the mean-

time, it is very sad," addressing Edith with an air of childish delight quite at variance with her words, "to be obliged to leave you so soon, when we were all so happy and comfortable ; but those things are unavoidable. Florinda really never has been in spirits since we came here, and my own health suffered a good deal. In short, I think we shall all be the better of a change. At the same time, I think I did right in coming here. I feel more comfortable at having seen poor Glenroy, and I flatter myself I have done him a little good. I said all I could to raise his spirits, poor man, and I think I succeeded ; and, *apropos*, I believe I must endeavour to see him again before I go, just to bid him good-bye. We must hope, however, to meet in town by-and-by. I think I have half persuaded Glenroy to bring you there next winter; indeed I am sure he will ; but perhaps you will go with us to Kinmore—why should not you, my dear ? You will be much the better of a little gaiety—you are too much moped here. *À propos*, Sir Reginald, I hope Florinda sent you the note that came enclosed for you from the Duchess?"

Sir Reginald merely bent his head in acknowledgement, as he advanced, and offered his arm to conduct her Ladyship to dinner, while she continued chattering all the way along.

They were seated before Madame Latour joined them, and when she did, her spirits seemed no less excited than Lady Elizabeth's, at the prospect of exchanging Glenroy for Kinmore ; and both were so

talkative during dinner, that the silence of the rest of the company was as much a matter of necessity as of choice. Lady Elizabeth talked of the anticipated pleasures of Kinmore, of the charming Duchess, and her brother, Lord Errington, who was dying for love of Florinda, and for whom she thought Florinda had a sort of a *nuance* of preference ; and she appealed to Sir Reginald, who sat pale and frowning, as if scarcely able to endure the nonsense she uttered.

"I'm sure, Miss Edith, you may be thankful you are not a great heiress," said the simple-minded Mrs. Macauley ; "for *you* may be sure you will be married for true love, and for nothing else."

"Oh ! unquestionably," cried Lady Elizabeth ; "my daughter's rank and fortune, together with her beauty and talents, render her, beyond comparison, the most *recherché* person in the world. She will be sadly teased, poor love ! amongst such a crowd of adorers, as the Duchess calls them." Sir Reginald here rose and rang the bell violently ; then, when the summons was answered, seemed at a loss what to ask for. Edith gazed on him with surprise and fear, and again a strange wild suspicion flashed upon her as she encountered the malignant smile of Madame Latour. "And now let us arrange something about our journey to-morrow. We must start early—by twelve, if possible. That won't be too early for me, Dr. Price ? You will arrange everything for me, as usual, you know. And, Sir Reginald, I hope we shall have your company ; or, if you would prefer it, perhaps Florinda

will give you a seat in her carriage ; don't you think so, Madame Latour ?”

But Sir Reginald had caught Edith's eye fixed upon him with an expression of the most intense anxiety : and before Madame Latour could reply, he made a strong effort at regaining his composure ; and, with the tone and manner of suppressed agitation, he hastily said—“ I regret I cannot have that honour ; I am otherwise engaged.” And as he spoke he became very pale.

“ Ah, engaged !” cried her Ladyship, who, when in good humour, was always in high spirits. “ That is a very significant word, and we must find out the meaning of it. Come, my dear,” taking Edith's arm, “ you can perhaps tell me the nature of Sir Reginald's engagement ?—What a very pretty blush,” she whispered, as they were leaving the room. “ Madame Latour, don't you think Edith blushes uncommonly well ?”

“ Mais oui,” replied Madame Latour ; “ je voudrois que Miss Malcomb, put donner un peu de ses belles couleurs au pauvre Sir Reginaal, il est si pale ! Il a l'air, vat you call unâpee.”

“ By-the-bye, now that you mention it, I think he does look a little paler and thinner, and more grave than he used to do,” said Lady Elizabeth ; “ but I have observed that some men do look rather grave when they are going to be married.”

“ Sir Reginaal marrie !” exclaimed Madame Latour, in real or affected astonishment—“ c'est ne pas possible ! Il me semble mourant—mourant de chagrin

—de desespoir—de——non——non ! je ne le crois pas, Meess Malcomb ; assurément ce n'est pas vrai—vous ne le croyez pas ?” And Madame Latour fixed her eyes on Edith, who, trembling as she was with emotion, despised her too much to betray it.

“Come, come,” cried Lady Elizabeth, “we have said quite enough on that subject ;” then putting her arm within Edith’s, and drawing her a little aside—“Yes, ’tis as I hinted before, she certainly had a design in that quarter—how very absurd, poor woman, that she cannot conceal her disappointment ! How any one can admire her eyes ! and do you observe how frightfully her head is dressed to-day ? And now, my dear, come to my dressing-room, and let me hear all about this marriage of yours, that you have kept such a profound secret.”

On entering the dressing-room, such a tumultuous greeting took place between the dogs and their mistress that Edith was spared the embarrassment of a reply.

“We shall be quiet here,” continued Lady Elizabeth, throwing herself into a *chaise longue*, while the dogs continued to bark and cough out their welcome ; “quiet is absolutely necessary to me in my delicate state of health. You will find a seat somewhere, my dear,” casting her eyes around on the various chairs, which were covered with dresses, hats, and caps. “Rosalie,” she called to her maid in the inner apartment, “Otez ces bérrets et ce manteau, et avancez une chaise pour mademoiselle. Now, my dear, never

mind her, she don't understand a word of English ; but, *à propos* (ring the bell first, I must speak to Rousseau about putting new strings to my guitar before we go)—well, and so you were telling me—I forget how it was you and Sir Reginald first became acquainted—is not that a knock at the door ? How tiresome ! See who it is, my dear.—Oh, Dr. Price, is that you ? come in.—I must beg you will see the housekeeper yourself about the refreshments we shall require in the carriage ; you know how little I eat, but I find variety absolutely necessary for me ; in fact, my dear, the stomach requires to be amused as well as the mind ”—turning to Edith—“ and that is a secret worth knowing.” But the secret was lost on Edith, who had taken the opportunity of Doctor Price’s entrance to make her exit.

CHAPTER IV.

WITHOUT a general knowledge of human nature, the particular study of an individual is of little use in enabling us to draw accurate conclusions as to the effect events may produce on the mind ; for, as some one has truly said, there is nothing so inconsistent as consistency. Edith thought she knew her father sufficiently to be certain he would rejoice at hearing of the approaching departure of his lady, and she therefore hastened to his apartment to communicate the pleasing intelligence ; but, to her utter surprise, it was received with every symptom of dissatisfaction and displeasure.

“Going away to-morrow !” he repeated, at least half-a-dozen times ; “that is the most extraordinary thing I ever met with in the whole course of my life ! I can scarcely say I have seen her, the mother, yet ; and the other one, the daughter, I’ve never once set eyes upon ; and I don’t so much as know yet what brought them here at all. What’s taking them away in such a hurry ? The duchess of nonsense ! what do I care for the Duchess of Porchester ? they did not

come here to visit her, but to see me; and it's quite inconceivable to me what's taking them away. I can't make it out; there's something I don't understand in it—there's something not right—there's something quite wrong! They must have been ill used since they came to the house, or they would not be leaving it so soon. How has that simpleton Molly Macauley been behaving herself? that creature really has not the sense of a sparrow—to go away, too, at the very time of your marriage. Ring the bell. I shall have this cleared up; they shall not leave this house till I know the reason of such behaviour. What's keeping that fellow Duncan? ring again. I want him to help me to dress, for I'm coming to the drawing-room. I must know the meaning of this. So go away now, and don't let me hear any of your nonsense. *I shall go,*" stamping his crutch, "if I should go on the crown of my head."

And Edith, knowing how vain expostulation was, withdrew, trembling at the thoughts of another scene between the Chief and his lady, and anticipating an abrupt disclosure of her approaching marriage. She next sought Florinda; but she was denied admittance to her, on the plea of her Ladyship's headache being so bad she was unable to see any one, save Madame Latour, who was as usual closeted with her. She then repaired to Lady Elizabeth, to acquaint her with what had passed with her father, and to try, if possible, to prevail upon her to gratify him, if he should be very pressing with them to remain a little

longer at Glenroy. But her Ladyship was busy directing and superintending the movements of her attendants, in packing the variety of litter which still lay scattered around, such as dresses, jewels, music, writing and drawing implements, French novels, drugs, etc. etc. She therefore scarcely listened to her, and only answered the invitation she gave in her father's name for a longer stay, by a quick and peremptory refusal, or a slight acquiescence as to meeting him in the drawing-room. Vexed and perplexed, poor Edith knew not where to turn ; there was no one near to whom she could speak of the untoward aspect of affairs, still less to whom she could apply for advice and assistance. To Reginald, who had once used to be her confidant and counsellor, she now felt an unaccountable reluctance to have recourse ; an invisible but impassable barrier seemed to have been raised between them ; but by whom she could not tell ; it was something she felt, but could neither describe nor comprehend. Such was the tenor of her thoughts as she sat alone in the drawing-room, her head resting on her hand, and the tears unconsciously dropping from her eyes, when the door opened, and the object of her meditations entered, with an air of dejection and gloom. He gazed on her for some moments, but said nothing. Edith could not speak, but her tears fell faster. Reginald sighed, but it was a sigh that breathed more of discontent and displeasure than of sympathy or sorrow. He remained for some time as if struggling with his

emotion ; then, in an agitated voice, he said, "Edith, you appear to be unhappy?"

Edith struggled against her feelings, and with a melancholy smile replied, "Only sorrowful."

"And why sorrowful?" demanded Sir Reginald. "After what has passed, I did not expect—I flattered myself—I—if there is any cause—"

Edith sighed, and, in spite of her efforts to restrain them, tears continued to drop from her eyes.

"For Heaven's sake, Edith, tell me, I conjure you, as you value my peace, as you value your own—tell me the cause of your tears, of your sorrow?"

"I cannot tell," said Edith, with emotion ; "I scarcely know myself ; but strange, vague, undefined, but very painful feelings, take possession of me."

"You did not use to be fanciful or vapourish," said Reginald, looking earnestly at her.

"Nor am I now," said Edith, more firmly ; "but—" she stopped, and her voice quivered, "we speak a strange language to each other now, Reginald—it was not thus we were wont to talk in former times."

"And whose fault is that, Edith?" he asked abruptly, as he stooped to caress his dog to hide his confusion.

"Not mine," replied she faintly.

Sir Reginald raised his head, but his eyes were still fixed on his dog, while he said, in a quick, hurried manner, "Yet after what passed to-day, a few hours ago, in your father's presence, it seems somewhat

strange that I should find you thus apparently wretched."

"Ah, Reginald! you did not use to speak thus hardly to me," said Edith reproachfully, as she strove to dispel her tears.

"I did not use to see you look as if you were going to be sacrificed," he replied, with increasing harshness of manner.

"*You know* it is not so," said Edith tenderly, and she blushed as she said it.

Reginald made no reply. Edith gathered courage, and went on—"But were I to judge thus of you, what might I not think? what ought I not to think?"

Reginald's colour rose, and for a few seconds he seemed as if at a loss how to reply; he then said, "Of course, I might have expected that accusation would be answered by recrimination; had I complained of your spirits being too high, you would to a certainty have replied that 'twas because mine were so boisterous; 'tis the way, not with all, but with a great part of your sex, Edith."

Edith's heart swelled at this taunt, but she made an effort to repress her feelings, and with tolerable calmness said, "If I am the foolish, unreasonable creature you represent me to be, you cannot wish——" her voice failed her, but she added, in a faltering accent, "We had better part."

This was the very point to which her faithless lover had, unconsciously to himself, been aiming to bring her, that the odium of the quarrel might rest

upon her ; but, though blinded by selfish passion, he was not so lost to every generous feeling as not to be smitten with a sense of his own injustice and cruelty. Passion and conscience struggled in his breast, and, averse to yield entirely to either, he sought to compromise between them.

"Edith," he said with emotion, "your happiness is dear to me as my own ; if it is to be attained by my relinquishing my right to your affections—Edith, is it so ?—Speak to me, I implore you." And he grasped her hand, and gazed intensely on her face, on which deep blushes and deathly paleness alternately succeeded each other.

"Tell me," cried Reginald, with increasing vehemence, "what it is you wish—what you would have me do ? and you shall be gratified, even at the expense of my own happiness ; more I cannot say." And he dropped the hand he held.

"I have no wish, Reginald," said Edith faintly, "but to see you such as you were in former happy days."

"That can never be," interrupted he impatiently. "I have told you I am changed. I have known suffering, and anguish—and—I can never be as I have been. If that is a crime in your eyes, then I *am* most culpable."

"No, Reginald, you wrong me," cried Edith, in tender emotion. "Perhaps I wrong you ; yet strange doubts will arise in spite of all—misgivings of—I know not what, Reginald ; I would fain tell you what

I sometimes think—what I fear—but the dread of hurting you——”

She stopped in extreme agitation, without daring to raise her eyes to Reginald, who remained silent, and evidently not less embarrassed than herself. The wished-for yet dreaded *éclaircissement* seemed now on the point of taking place, and he feared alike to aid or impede it. Edith alone should be the destroyer of her own happiness. She might wrest from him the secret of his heart; she might tear aside the veil in which he had sought to shroud the image he adored; she might rush into the sanctuary of his inmost thoughts, after he had warned her that there was a point at which she must stop. But never—no, never—should his lips breathe that name to her. Never should his be the hand to rend away her delusion. Where, then, was the injustice he should be guilty of? Who, then, could dare to say he had wronged her? Such was the sophistry with which the slave of passion strove to silence the small still voice of conscience, while he hung in agonising suspense on the word that should next issue from Edith's lips, as that which was to seal both their dooms; but the stroke was yet averted. Both were roused from this state of mute but high-wrought feeling by the bustle which invariably attended Glenroy's approach, and presently the Chief entered, leaning on his servant, and shuffling along with great difficulty, attended by Mrs. Macauley and Benbowie. In the agitation of her spirits, Edith felt unable to stand the scrutiny

even of such common observers as these, and she was hastily retreating, when recalled, in an authoritative voice, by Glenroy, who never could bear to see anybody leave the room while he was in it.

"What's the meaning of this?" cried he in his loudest key; "going out of the room just at the moment I'm coming into it? Is that a proper behaviour? I really think you ought to be ashamed of yourself, Edith. Is that the way you welcome your old father to the use of his feet?"

"Oh, papa!" said Edith, taking his hand, "how can you doubt——"

"How can I doubt? What am I to doubt?" interrupted Glenroy peevishly. "I'm for none of your doubts—I hate doubts. I desire I may never see or hear of doubts, for I despise them. *I* never doubt—I never did doubt—and never will doubt, for I hate all doubtful characters. So come you here, Reginald, and sit by me, for I know there's nothing doubtful about you—all's open and above-board with you. Now, Mrs. Macauley, I desire you to hold your tongue for the rest of this evening; haven't I been deaved with it the whole of this day, and do you think I'm going to submit to be preached to by you any longer? I'll do no such thing," stamping his stick.

"Well, but, Glenroy, as sure as death I'm not speaking."

"Not speaking! you never give over speaking—your tongue never lies! but I'm for no speaking at present; so hold your tongue, and order the coffee,

and go and see what's keeping Lady Elizabeth and the rest of them—I'm waiting for them—I don't understand it. I must know what's the meaning of this; for I'll not suffer either my own character or the character of my house to be aspersed; however, I shall have it all cleared up before this night is over, and unless they choose to stay to your marriage——”

“I beg—I—I entreat, Glenroy—I,” stammered Reginald, violently agitated.

“Ay, ay, I understand what you would say,” interrupted Glenroy, “and you shall have everything your own way, Reginald; you know you're as much master here as I am, and more too, for I'm grown a perfect cipher in my own house now. I've no more authority than if it didn't belong to me. But there's one thing I'm determined upon, and that is, that there shall be no more of this shilly-shallying by these silly women, but that you shall have your own way, Reginald, and be married before you're a month older, so don't say another word about it—there has been a great deal too much talking already. I never knew any good come of talking—I daresay it's just that creature Molly Macauley's long tongue that has put everything wrong—she really ought to have her mouth stitched up!”

CHAPTER V.

MEANWHILE Mrs. Macauley, anxious to do her part, was labouring away to keep the peace between Glenroy and his lady. As the first object in her life was the favour of the Chief, so she could not conceive that it was a thing to be lightly esteemed by anybody else, much less by his own wedded wife. She therefore gladly availed herself of the errand she had been despatched upon, to apprise Lady Elizabeth, at the same time, how greatly Glenroy was distressed at the thoughts of her departure. A piece of information which she had no doubt would at once annihilate the whole scheme, and settle her at Glenroy for as long a time as it should be her lord's pleasure that she should remain. But all Mrs. Macauley's eloquence failed in producing any effect on her Ladyship's feelings.

"Oh, my Lady!" said she, "you must not speak to Glenroy of going away, for 'deed he's so hospitable, and so used to be humoured, and to get everything his own way (and that's no more than what he ought to get), that if he's crossed by your Ladyship, he'll be neither to hold nor to bind, good man that he is!"

"You don't mean to say I am in the power of a

madman, and that I can't get away ? ” said her Ladyship, in some alarm.

“ Oh no ! no at all ; there will nothing happen to you if you'll just be so good as let Glenroy take his own way, and be discreet to him ; and if he shall say black's white, if your Ladyship would just please to say the same ; and then, maybe, if you would be so good as to offer to stay to please him, he would then be ready to let you go.”

“ It is excessively troublesome,” said her Ladyship ; “ really quite childish in Glenroy.”

“ 'Deed, and it's a very odd fancy that's come on him,” said the simple Mrs. Macauley ; “ and maybe he is now and then just a little of what you would call not just so clever and sensible as he used to be ; but then, you know, that makes it all the easier for your Ladyship to agree with him.”

“ Certainly,” said her Ladyship, “ when a man is fairly in his dotage, he must be treated like a child ; and I shall make a point of seeing him, and doing all I possibly can to soothe and gratify him, without giving way to his whims.” And with this laudable purpose in view, her Ladyship at length descended to the drawing-room.

But in the interval Glenroy had got a new light on the subject ; for Reginald, upon being made acquainted with the cause of his disturbance, had given a decided opinion in favour of the ladies being allowed to take their departure ; and the point was settled by his saying—and he tried to say it coolly

and steadily—that if they remained, he should take the opportunity of Glenroy having such agreeable company with him to pass a few days at Dunshiera.

“Well then, let them go,” cried the Chief, and at that moment his lady entered, fully prepared to be pressed to stay. They met with mutual embarrassment, for the fear of losing Reginald by any indiscreet word restrained Glenroy from what he called speaking his mind ; and his lady, somewhat intimidated by Mrs. Macauley’s representations, was no less guarded on her part. The salutations were therefore very well performed on both sides ; and there was even considerable politeness evinced in the passing but guarded remarks that were made by each. Glenroy inquired after Lady Waldegrave, and received in reply a very rational and moderate apology for her non-appearance, on the plea of being over-fatigued by going to church—an excuse admirably adapted to conciliate the Chief’s favour.

“But I hope, now you are so much recovered, Glenroy, I shall have an opportunity of presenting my daughter to you some day very soon,” said her Ladyship, bent on conciliating him at the *trifling* expense of truth ; nothing in reality being further from her wishes and intentions than that any such opportunity should be afforded.

“Why, I thought—didn’t somebody tell me you were going to leave us ?” said Glenroy, with some embarrassment.

“Why, we *were* talking about it,” replied the lady,

with the ease of one accustomed to tell *white lies* ; “but since you are unwilling to part with us——”

“Oh no! not at all,” interrupted Glenroy confusedly ; “that’s to say, I think people should always take their own way. I never interfere with anybody’s plans—never. I let everybody do as they like.”

“On my conscience, I never knew that before!” said Benbowie, with a look of stupefied amazement ; “but it’s very true—very true.”

“You are very kind, Glenroy,” said his lady ; “you know, the only plan I had in view by coming here was to have the pleasure of seeing you, and spending some time with you ; and I assure you, this visit has been a very great gratification to me. I am quite charmed to see you look so well, and to find you so comfortable.”

“You’ve seen much of my looks and comfort, or else not,” muttered Glenroy, the pent-up storm ready to take any direction.

“Not so much, to be sure, as I could have wished,” said the lady in a tender tone ; “but quite enough to satisfy me that you are well and happy, Glenroy.”

“Well and happy!” repeated the Chief indignantly, “do you tell me I am well, when I can hardly put my foot to the ground with gout?—and happy, when I’ve lost the finest young man that ever was born? Well and happy!—well and happy, to be sure!”

“Ah, to be sure, these are things that can’t be helped, Glenroy, and so we must bear them as well

as we can ! But you have a charming house ; this is a noble apartment, and I do assure you I have been very comfortable, and I think my appetite, upon the whole, has improved while I have been here. Dr. Price thinks so too."

"I know nothing about Dr. Price ; I don't desire to know anything about any of your doctors ; I know *I* have no appetite—*my* appetite's completely gone!"

"Ah ! but it will return again, Glenroy. You ought to amuse your stomach ; in fact, the stomach requires to be amused as well as the mind. I hope you will enjoy your own good dinners as much as some of your guests have done. I do assure you, you keep an excellent table."

"To be sure I do," said Glenroy scornfully.

"The soups and fish are excellent, which is not always the case in Scotland," continued the lady.

"Everything is excellent at my table," said the Chief proudly.

"Excuse me there, Glenroy, I cannot go quite so far ; for to own the truth, I do not think the *vol au vents* at all the thing."

"*Vol au vents !*" exclaimed Glenroy ; "do you think I trouble my head about such trash ?"

"Excuse me," said her Ladyship, with an air of offended dignity, "but I consider everything relating to a table as of consequence, and *vol au vents* are by no means so insignificant as——"

"They're so insignificant that I don't care if the

whole race were swept into the sea. *Vol au vents!* Let me hear no more of such trumpery on my table, Edith, remember that; I'm for none of your beggarly French, or your pock-pudding English dishes, made of nobody knows what. *Vol au vents!* the very scum of the earth!"

"Oh, my Lady, if you please, you must just humour him," whispered Mrs. Macauley; and her Ladyship contented herself with a shrug of her shoulders, and a look of contempt.

Madame Latour here entered the room, and was presented to Glenroy by his lady; and no sooner was that introduction over than Dr. Price made his appearance, and the same ceremony had to be performed with him. This gave time for Glenroy's blaze to go down; and scarcely were the ordinary salutations over, when, forgetting the restraint laid upon him, he turned to his lady, and said—"If you choose to stay a little longer, I shall show you what a true Highland feast is, on their wedding-day," pointing to Reginald and Edith; "of course you all know that my nephew and successor, Sir Reginald, is to be married to my daughter Edith immediately."

"Ah! so I have just discovered," cried her Ladyship gaily.

"Just discovered!" repeated Glenroy contemptuously; "where were your eyes that you did not see it long ago? But, Edith, what's the meaning of this? and why have you been making a mystery of your marriage? It's most extraordinary—I don't under-

stand it, for my part—a marriage that you've both reason to be proud of!"

Edith's confusion was too great to allow her to notice the anguish depicted on Reginald's features, as the piercing gaze of Madame Latour was fixed upon him.

"A very suitable match," said Lady Elizabeth ; "very suitable indeed ; but I think Florinda will be a good deal surprised—don't you think so, Madame Latour ?"

With marked emphasis, Madame Latour replied, "Vraiment oui !"

"Surprised !" repeated Glenroy ; "what is there to surprise anybody in that ? I think it would have been very extraordinary if it had been anything else. Surprised—hem ! they must be easily surprised !"

"Why, you must own, Glenroy, it is surprising the secret should have been so well kept, that none of us suspected it before to-day."

"Not suspect what's been known to every man, woman, and child about the place for these ten years at least ? They've been sweethearts ever since they were the height of that table. Wasn't it on that account she refused that English lord—what do you call him?—with his thirty thousand a year, and that wanted *his* black mare ? How long is it since your courtship began, Reginald ?—the very first day, I believe, that Edith and you were brought together, was it not ?"

"No, no, Glenroy," said his lady, attempting to be facetious ; "you forget that Florinda was his first love

—was it not so, Sir Reginald ? But she was coy, or cruel, or—how was it ?”

Reginald attempted to laugh, but it was a ghastly smile.

“ Well,” resumed the lady, “ we shall not talk of these things. I am sure Florinda will be delighted when she hears of what is to happen. Edith and I had a long confab in my dressing-room on the subject, and now I am quite *au fait* of the whole business ; but it’s a pity we had not known it sooner—we might have managed to have been present at the celebration—possibly Florinda might even have officiated as brides-maid ; but it is too late now.”

“ What’s too late ?” demanded Glenroy.

“ Oh ! nothing, nothing, papa,” cried Edith hastily.

“ What makes it too late ?” said the Chief, addressing his lady ; “ it’s the most sensible proposal I ever heard you make—just stay where you are till the marriage is over, and it will be a fine ploy for your daughter ; she may never have another opportunity of seeing a Highland wedding again, unless she can get a Highlandman for herself ; but she must let herself be seen if she expects to get a husband in this country.”

Lady Elizabeth trembled with indignation, and a little hysterical laugh rattled in her throat as she repeated, “ Lady Waldegrave *expect* to get a husband in the wilds of Scotland—he, he, he !”

“ And why not ?” demanded Glenroy.

“ Good heavens, Glenroy ! how can you talk so ? she who has the very flower of England at her feet !”

"Flowers of England ! bah !—pretty-like flowers, or else not—trash—weeds—that a Highland Chief would tramp below his feet." And Glenroy stamped with his stick, thus fitting as far as he could the action to the word.

"It is time—more than time—we were gone," said the lady, rising with an air of outraged dignity.

"Reginald, Edith," cried Glenroy, no less incensed, and throwing off all restraint, "hold both of your tongues!—I'm fit to speak for myself, and I *will* say this is the most extraordinary behaviour ever I met with in the course of my life! I wish to know the meaning of it. I wish to know what people mean by coming to my house, and then leaving it as if they weren't pleased with the treatment they had met with; if there has been any offence given or taken, I can only say I am ignorant of it. It has not been with my knowledge, and I desire to know what brought you here, and what's taking you away?"

"I have only to request, Glenroy," said his lady, still vibrating with anger, "that when you speak of Lady Waldegrave, it may be in more respectful terms than those you have just used."

"Respectful terms!" thundered Glenroy; "I'll speak of nobody in respectful terms! Respectful terms! I don't know the meaning of the phrase! I respect no man nor woman either, if she was lady fifty times over. It's very likely that I should respect *your* daughter, when I never did, and never will, respect my own, though she's going to be the wife of the man

on earth that's the most entitled to respect! But I suppose you're disappointed that you've not got him for your daughter. I suspect that's what's taking you away in such a hurry—it looks very like it."

"This is not to be endured!" cried Reginald, starting up; "allow me, Lady Elizabeth, to protect you from further insult." And taking her arm within his, he led her from the room, his cheek flushed, and his whole air and deportment expressive of the utmost agitation. At sight of this manifestation of Reginald's displeasure, Glenroy was instantly subdued, and Edith was despatched to try to bring them back; but Lady Elizabeth had retired to her own apartment, and refused to listen to any overtures of peace or reconciliation. Florinda and her friend remained invisible, and Reginald was nowhere to be found. Finding all her efforts to reunite the jarring elements of the party were vain, Edith at last sought the privacy of her chamber to ponder over the events of the day, which weighed heavily on her spirits.

CHAPTER VI.

THE following morning all was bustle and preparation, and nothing was to be seen but booted lackeys and bonneted abigails hurrying to and fro, their hands and arms filled with the thousand forget-me-nots pertaining to travellers of distinction. Lady Elizabeth (like many wiser people) had a great dislike to ferries, and at another time would have been almost frantic at the thought of venturing so precious an argosy as the heiress of Waldegrave even on the smooth surface of a summer sea, for half an hour; and indeed she did at first vow and protest she never would hear of such a thing. However, she at length yielded, upon finding there was no other way in which the journey could be accomplished so rapidly, as even Glenroy's stables could not furnish the requisite number of horses, and there was no time to procure them from the nearest post-house. To allay her maternal solicitude, she made Reginald and Edith severally promise that they would accompany Florinda across the ferry, she herself travelling to that point by land, where they were to meet, and proceed together to their destination. In the hurry and bustle of preparation, her Ladyship

appeared to have forgot the *fracas* of the preceding evening, and it seemed to have had rather a salutary effect on Glenroy, as he declared to Mrs. Macauley, while she poured out his coffee for him, that he felt better than he had done for a long time, and that, if once the house were rid of them, he should be quite well. Lady Waldegrave did not appear at breakfast, and Edith in vain sought to find her alone, for the purpose of explaining to her, as far as she could, the situation in which she stood with Sir Reginald. After what had passed—after she had been thus publicly proclaimed by her father as on the eve of her marriage—she thought she owed it to herself to say a few words to her on the subject, before they parted, perhaps for ever. It was also possible, too—but her heart trembled at the suggestion—that in so doing, she might discover whether there was any ground for the vague, nameless, shapeless fears which haunted her imagination. But Lady Waldegrave seemed carefully to shun all approaches to confidence, by taking care to keep either Madame Latour or her maid in constant attendance upon her to the very moment of her departure. Edith thought—but it might be fancy—that she looked disconcerted when she declared her intention of accompanying her across the ferry; but before there was time for anything to be said, she was suddenly called away by an imperative message from Glenroy. Upon hastening to him, she found the whole of his anxiety was to know when these people were going away, that he might have a

quiet house, and that Reginald and she might be at leisure to make out their marriage. As soon as she could extricate herself from her father, Edith went to rejoin Florinda, who was walking slowly down to the beach, leaning on Madame Latour, and followed by her attendants. Sir Reginald walked by them, but her head was averted from him, and he had an air of haughty mortification, as though his attentions had been rejected.

"I hope, dear Edith, you won't think it necessary to take this voyage with me *par complaisance*," said Florinda, in answer to a remark of Edith's that she feared an approaching shower.

"You don't suppose I mind a shower on my own account?" said Edith. "It was only on yours, for you are not used to such buffettings of wind and weather as I am."

"There is no occasion for your running any risks, however," said Reginald hastily. "I shall see Lady Waldegrave safe to Kinmore."

"I beg I may not interfere with either Sir Reginald Malcolm's duties or pleasures," said Lady Waldegrave coldly.

Edith was confounded; her heart swelled as she thought—"He leaves me after all, and at what a time!" But she walked on in silence till they reached the boat.

"I have ordered my horses to meet me at the ferry," said Reginald, addressing her in the same hurried manner; "and I shall probably return to-morrow."

Edith's cheek flushed to crimson ; but she caught Madame Latour's malicious eyes directed to her with a sort of triumphant smile ; and making a violent effort to retain her composure, she said, "Having promised Lady Elizabeth that I should make a point of accompanying Lady Waldegrave across the ferry, I feel bound to perform my promise."

"But you will have no one to return with you," said Reginald, evidently dissatisfied at this arrangement. Edith made no reply, for she could not speak ; but she stepped into the boat, while Sir Reginald, having handed in Lady Waldegrave and Madame Latour, leaped in and placed himself between them.

It was one of those bright breezy mornings, when the sun, careering amid an ocean of white flickering clouds, seems to smile as he beholds them driven hither and thither on the wings of the wind, now casting their broad shadows on the mountain side, now viewing their own fair fantastic shapes in the depths of the clear waters. For a while the boat skimmed rapidly along ; but the clouds seemed to hurry still faster and faster, their soft fleecy forms gradually turning to one dense expanse of livid gray. The sea-fowl were seen fluttering before the impending storm. At length the distant roar of the thunder was heard reverberating amongst the mountains, while the wind, which had suddenly fallen, as suddenly rose to stormy gusts, accompanied with driving sheets of rain.

"You will get wet, I fear," said Sir Reginald, as

he drew a boat-cloak round Lady Waldegrave, and wrapped her in it, with the manner of one whom anxiety rendered careless of common forms. Edith felt a pang at this action, trifling as it was; but Reginald seemed unconscious alike of her presence or of Madame Latour's hysterical screams, for as the blast now raved with the fury of a mountain storm, that lady's cries for self-preservation increased in proportion. To those unaccustomed to the sudden and violent squalls which sweep over the mountain firths, and give to them all the sublimity of power and danger, this was an appalling storm. The darkness of night hung around, but the raging waters were white with foam, and the little boat, now tossed to the clouds on the crest of some foaming billow, was as quickly precipitated into the yawning gulf, which seemed opening to receive it. Edith had witnessed similar scenes, and was too well accustomed to the capricious nature of inland navigation to be as much alarmed as her more inexperienced companions. Still there was enough of the perilous to excite feelings of awe, which would have raised her heart in prayer to Him who rules the tempest, and stills the wave. But, alas! one was there who stood even between her and heaven. Her eyes were fixed on Reginald, but Reginald's sought not hers—they were bent on Lady Waldegrave, with an expression of the most intense anxiety, and as she sat pale and trembling, uttering broken exclamations of alarm, he strove to soothe her by vehement assurances of safety and protection. But at length, as if overcome with

terror, she closed her eyes, and sank back, to all appearance lifeless. Then the long-repressed feelings of her lover's heart burst forth; and, forgetting everything but that his adored Florinda lay dying—dead—before him, he threw his arms around her, called wildly upon her in broken accents of the most impassioned tenderness to revive, and be his—his life—his love! and he placed her head on his shoulder, and hung over her as though his own life were at issue—again and again reiterating his vows of love, his fond entreaties.

And where was the neglected, the forgotten Edith? As if transfixed with agony, she remained calm and motionless—her eyes distended, her pale lips apart; she sat horror-stricken—speechless—and beheld each fond care that ought to have been hers lavished upon another. A thousand racks could not have inflicted the tortures she endured. A whole life of suffering had been concentrated into one moment, but that moment would cast a blight over her whole existence!

In a short time, however, the wind subsided, the rain ceased, the roar of the angry waters died away, and the sun once more began to struggle through the mass of black clouds which still encompassed him. The boat had been driven from its course towards the point of Inch Orran, and the crew, anticipating another squall, deemed it advisable to land. The progress of the little vessel had been anxiously watched from the house, and its hospitable inmates had hastened to the beach to welcome and assist the

dripping passengers. Reginald, still reckless of all but his own selfish, soul-absorbing interests, bore Florinda in his arms to shore ; but it was in silence, for his feelings were now suppressed when too late.

When Edith was consigned by Captain Malcolm to the cordial embrace of his wife, she folded a mere living statue to her bosom ; no sound passed her lips, no expression spoke in her eye—all was the silence and vacancy of palsied feelings—of stupefaction of heart. When conveyed to an apartment, Mrs. Malcolm in vain had recourse to the usual remedies, or sought gently to soothe her scared spirits to the salutary relief of tears. Edith seemed like a bird which had escaped some deadly peril, only to sink down stunned and exhausted, to pant its life away.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was not until he had seen Lady Waldegrave restored to consciousness, that Reginald awoke from the delirium into which his selfish, headstrong passion had thrown him. He started as from a dream ; but at the same time he was conscious that it was a dream in which he had laid bare the inmost recesses of his heart—that he had given to the winds that secret which he had sworn should never pass his lips—and that in the very ear of plighted love he had proclaimed the apostasy of his affection. His cheek burned with remorse and shame, even while—slave to passion!—his heart bounded with delight as one who had flung his fetters far from him. The barrier was now broken down which had separated him from his idol ; accident had now discovered to Edith that he loved another ; he never would have told her so—he never would have renounced her, but she might—she would—now renounce him—she might be happy too ; and a tumult of wild contradictory feelings swelled in his heart as conscience and passion struggled for mastery. He waited with the most intense interest to hear how Edith bore the shock he well

knew she must have sustained by this abrupt disclosure of his infidelity ; and not even the witchery of Florinda's charms, as she appeared in renovated beauty, could so wholly engross him, but that both eye and ear were frequently turned from her to catch some tidings of Edith—dear Edith ! What would he not give to be assured she was happy—as happy as he should be when satisfied that he had not been the destroyer of her happiness ! Unable any longer to endure the workings of his own mind, he sent to request that Mrs. Malcolm would see him, if but for a single moment.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Malcolm was keeping watch, by the couch of poor Edith. In the bustle that had prevailed at the landing of the little party, Reginald's behaviour had passed unnoticed ; and thus Edith's state of mind was inexplicable to one who had known her long, and had seen her, in circumstances of at least equal danger, evince the utmost strength of mind and self-possession. She had seen Lady Waldegrave for a few minutes, and had expressed to her her surprise and alarm at Edith's aberration of mind ; but though she appeared shocked, she had hastily waived the subject, saying she herself had been wholly insensible to what had passed. As for Madame Latour, she was still too hysterical to be spoken with ; nor, indeed, had it been otherwise, could she have thrown any light upon the subject beyond her own conjectures, as she and the attendants had all been too much agitated and absorbed in personal alarms to have eyes

or ears for anything but their own danger. Aware of the impetuosity of Sir Reginald's feelings, Mrs. Malcolm was unwilling to excite them by a hasty disclosure of Edith's alarming condition. She had therefore quietly despatched a message for the nearest medical assistance, trusting that, in the meantime, silence and repose would gradually restore her mind to its right tone. But her gentle cares had hitherto been vain ; her hapless charge continued in the same state of mute, rigid suffering ; her breast heaving as if with some forbidden woe ; her eyes fearfully open, as though they gazed on some vision of affright.

On receiving Sir Reginald's message, however, Mrs. Malcolm thought it best to comply with his request. She found him in an adjoining apartment, pacing to and fro, in all the restlessness of excitement and suspense. It was so completely a part of that lady's character to speak the truth at all times, and in all circumstances, that it never occurred to her to dissemble, or give it any false glosses to serve a temporary purpose ; but she always spoke it with a sympathy and tenderness which usually disarmed it of its bitterest sting. But it was not from the fiery unregulated mind of Sir Reginald, that any truth, however gently told, which reproached his conscience and opposed his wishes, could meet with a submissive reception. Cautious and considerate as Mrs. Malcolm had been in her communications, he was stung to the soul by self-reproach, and gave way to the most vehement expressions of anguish and despair. He had

been, he said, the destroyer of one who was dear to him as his own life. He called Heaven to witness there was no sacrifice he was not ready to make for her happiness ; he had suffered much for her sake ; he would suffer all—anything—everything, to see her restored—he would see her himself—he would explain everything. His happiness was in her hands—he never could know peace until he saw her well and happy—and, for the moment, he was sincere. But Mrs. Malcolm feared little for the passionate overflows of that grief, excessive as it was, which could thus vent itself in outward manifestations. It was the silence of poor Edith's overcharged heart which alarmed her ; but she strove, by mild and gentle words, to soothe Sir Reginald into composure, and at last succeeded in restoring him to a comparative degree of calmness.

The surgeon soon after arrived, but as he possessed no more than common penetration, and in the course of his practice was little accustomed to minister to minds diseased, he saw nothing more than a mere nervous panic in the case. Having, therefore, administered an opiate, and remained till it took effect, he recommended the patient to be kept perfectly quiet, and said he had no doubt but that he should find all well when he returned the following day. This was a load off Reginald's heart, and his buoyant spirit soon rose in proportion to its previous depression. Edith, he was sure, would soon surmount the shock she had sustained by his abrupt disclosure ; her

sentiments would change, and all would yet be well. On hearing so favourable a report, Lady Waldegrave prepared for setting off to join her mother; for, although messengers had been despatched both to her and Glenroy, to acquaint them with the safety of the party, it was not to be supposed she would rest satisfied with that, or that any other assurance, short of actually seeing her daughter, would quiet her natural fears.

Florinda said she would have preferred remaining where she was, but that she knew Lady Elizabeth would not proceed without her, and that she could not bear the thought of bringing so large a party, at such a time, to a house where quiet was enjoined. This seemed only what was considerate and reasonable, and Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm forbore to urge the invitation which their hospitality, rather than their inclination, had led them to make. They therefore followed that admirable precept—"Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest," and ordered their horses to be got ready to carry the travellers forward on their journey.

"Although it is only a few miles from this to the ferry," said Captain Malcolm, addressing Lady Waldegrave; "yet as the road in some places borders rather too much on the sublime, I hope you will allow me, *faute de mieux*, to escort you so far, that I may consign you into Lady Elizabeth's hands, past all peril by land as well as by water, I trust."

Before Florinda could reply, Reginald hastily inter-

posed, and said, "Pardon me, Captain Malcolm; but I undertook the office of conducting Lady Waldegrave to her friends, and therefore consider myself bound to see her safe under Lady Elizabeth's care."

"It was an important trust that was committed to you, I admit; but may you not delegate your authority to another, and appoint me your proxy?" said Captain Malcolm, who supposed Sir Reginald must be doing the greatest violence to his feelings in quitting Edith at such a time, even for a few hours. "What do you say Lady Waldegrave? don't you think a staid old Highlander may be as safe an escort as a hot-brained young lover, who——"

"I have already said," cried Reginald, with a heightened colour, and in great embarrassment, "that I must see Lady Waldegrave to the ferry myself. The distance is short, and I shall find my own horses there, or most likely I shall take the boat in returning. At all events I shall be back here certainly within a few hours; and in that time——" He stopped, in emotion.

"And in that time," said Captain Malcolm kindly, "our dear charge will, I trust, have a refreshing sleep; and that on your return you will find her perfectly restored. I give you credit, Sir Reginald, in thus sacrificing your own feelings to your sense of duty."

Reginald turned hastily away. Florinda slightly blushed, while she answered that she hoped Sir Reginald would not think it necessary to make any

sacrifice on her account ; and she pronounced the word with emphasis.

At that moment the carriage was announced, and Madame Latour, having composed her spirits, changed her dress, repaired her charms, and partaken plentifully of some refreshments, now made her appearance. Mrs. Malcolm, who had been with Edith, also entered to receive the adieus of the guests. She was struck at first with hearing of Sir Reginald's intention of accompanying the party so far on their way ; but, like her husband, she gave him credit for his sense of duty thus prevailing over his dearer interests, especially when she read the struggle of his mind depicted on his countenance. Nor did this evince any want of common penetration. Who can look back upon events in their own life without acknowledging that there were times when they could not discern those things face to face, which, viewed retrospectively, showed clear as noon-day ?

CHAPTER VIII.

EDITH slept, but her sleep was short, and she awoke from it slowly and heavily ; her head confused ; her heart oppressed with a dreamy sense of ills too dreadful to be endured ; a stunning sense of misery, occasionally roused to anguish, as long-cherished thoughts of happiness struggled with new and agonising feelings of misery. At length she put aside the curtain and gazed around with a bewildered and inquiring look. Mrs. Malcolm, who had been sitting anxiously watching her, now approached, and in a tender yet cheerful tone accosted her ; but Edith at first only replied by a look of alarm and amazement, then, in a hurried manner, asked, “Where am I ?”

“With me, my love ; and you have been asleep.”

“Then I have dreamt !” she cried quickly ; then, wildly clasping her hands, “And, oh ! what a dream it was ! I would not tell it to any one—no, not for worlds !”

“Try not to think of it either,” said Mrs. Malcolm soothingly ; “but close your eyes, and pray to God, Edith, love.”

“And yet, if it was a dream,” interrupted Edith, “why am I here ? and where is——” and her eyes

wandered round the room, then, sinking back on her pillow, she sighed, and said, "But it does not signify, since you say it was only a dream."

She remained silent for some minutes, and Mrs. Malcolm hoped she had again fallen asleep; but quickly raising herself in bed, she said, in a hurried tone, "I must get up—that dream haunts me here—it is upon my pillow—it is in my head—it is upon my heart—I must get away from it."

"Dearest Edith, you shall do as you please," said her kind, considerate friend; "but will you not oblige me by remaining in bed for a little longer, and I will sit by you?"

"But if it were a dream, why—why do I see nobody else—where are *they*?" she demanded, in a tone of forced, unnatural calmness.

"Those you love best are all safe and well."

"*I* love!" exclaimed she, "how should you know? No one knows how *I* love—he knows it not himself." And her breast heaved with strong emotion.

"Yes, dear Edith, there is one who knows you love him, but perhaps you know not how much he loves you, and how wretched he is about you."

"About *me*!" shrieked Edith; "oh, no—no—not about *me*," and her whole frame shook convulsively.

"Yes, dearest, even about you, and about no one else; but there is some misunderstanding——"

"Do you think me mad?" cried Edith, quickly interrupting her; "if you do, you are much, very much mistaken." Then shaking her head mournfully,

"But if you knew what I know—if you had seen what I saw—if you felt what I feel—but nobody shall ever know, it shall all be buried with me, and there will be an end of it."

Mrs. Malcolm saw that her feelings had sustained some rude shock, somehow connected with Reginald, and she feared to name him in the present excited state of her mind ; she therefore tried another chord —a chord which, rightly touched, can never fail to vibrate in the feeling heart.

"Yes, my love, when it is God's will we shall all die and be buried, and there will indeed be an end of our earthly sorrows ; but, I trust, He will spare you to us yet a while ; for what would become of your father, your old gray-haired father, Edith, if he should lose you, his only child ?"

Edith's heart heaved high, and for a few moments she struggled violently with her feelings ; at last nature prevailed ; she burst into a passionate flood of tears, and throwing her arms round her friend's neck, wept long in silent anguish.

Mrs. Malcolm made no attempt to check the genial current of feeling ; for she knew that the grief which can feel even despair is never so dangerous as that which benumbs the spirits, and bereaves it even of the sense of feeling ; and fragile as is the mould of the human heart, 'tis one which may be bruised, but is rarely broken by the first rude shock it sustains. Oh, the depth of that agony which some may feel and live ! Oh, the world of woe which may lie in the

small compass of one solitary heart ! Who can declare “all which may be borne and never told”?

It was not by confiding the secret of her sorrow that Edith felt she could lessen the burden of it. No human voice could speak comfort to her soul ; no human hand could wipe away her tears ; no human thought could fathom the depth of her anguish ; no word of hers, therefore, should ever declare the wrongs she had endured. All she wished was to die ; and as she laid her head on her pillow, it was with the look of one who desired never to raise it again.

Although the sense of this suffering lay deeper than she could discern, Mrs. Malcolm deemed it unwise to endeavour too hastily to penetrate to it, and she rather sought gradually to lead Edith to the disclosure of it herself. A long interval passed, during which Edith remained wholly absorbed in the anguish of her own spirit.

“Is there no way in which a fond and faithful friend can help you, dearest Edith ?” said her friend gently.

“None !” answered Edith, in a voice so sad and a tone so deep as seemed to bar all attempts at gaining her confidence.

“Not even by sharing your sorrow, my love ?”

“You cannot !” returned Edith in the same despairing accent.

“But there is one who may—one to whom you are still dear—one who has suffered much on your account——” She stopped, for she saw Edith’s pale features convulsed with agony.

"Edith, dearest! is there nothing I *can* do for you?" cried her friend, as her own tears fell on the cold trembling hand she held in hers.

"Nothing!" said Edith, in the deep tone of hopeless misery, as she turned away.

"Yet, dearest, together we may thank God that your senses are restored to you; together we may pray that He will lighten this load of anguish from your heart; together we may ask of Him that His peace may calm your troubled spirit."

"It cannot be," murmured Edith in a low, suffocated voice.

Mrs. Malcolm was shocked, but she said, in a soothing tone, "Strive against such unworthy, such unholy thoughts, Edith; and though you will not confide your grief to me, remember it is known to Him, who, doubtless for some wise purpose, has appointed this trial, whatever it is. Believe, dear Edith, only believe, that you are in the hands of a tender Father, an Almighty Protector, who can turn even our sorrows into blessings. I do not ask you not to weep, but I pray you may not yield to despair."

Edith made no reply, but she suffered her hand to be held in those of her friend, while they were raised in supplication for her; and gradually her features relaxed into a softer expression of anguish. The convulsive heavings of her breast subsided, her tears again flowed freely, and her judicious friend, tenderly embracing her, left her for a little, as she hoped, to the repose of exhausted nature.

CHAPTER IX.

IT is a common remark, that few things exercise a more baneful and despotic influence on the mind and feelings than an irregular or misplaced attachment ; and Sir Reginald formed no exception to this general rule. Shrinking from the contemplation of the torture he had inflicted on the true and tender heart which had so long and devotedly been his, he sought to stifle the sense of her wrongs in the charms of Lady Waldegrave's society. It would have been agony to his selfish, fiery spirit to have waited and watched the slow progress of her recovery from the wound his own hand had inflicted ; for to "suffer and be still" is perhaps one of the hardest lessons the proud heart of man can stoop to learn. He therefore strove by more active exertion to banish the distracting thoughts that filled his mind, and sought a temporary refuge from the upbraidings of his conscience in the flattering unction that he was doing his duty, even while deserting the victim of his perfidy for the author of her ruin. All this may appear inconsistent with a nature hitherto represented as amiable and generous. But there is a virtue and a generosity whose roots are in

selfishness, and which, when brought to the test, will ever bear its worthless fruits. Neither can consistency dwell in that heart whose only law is impulse, whose only stimulant is self-gratification.

The presence of Madame Latour was some restraint upon the passionate overflow of his feelings. Much as he longed to lay open his whole heart to Florinda, he naturally shrank from displaying it to any other eye than that of love. Enough, however, passed on both sides to satisfy themselves that they were mutually beloved, and for the present that consciousness sufficed. On reaching their destination, they found Lady Elizabeth in all the fidgetiness of anxiety and impatience, and a foolish scene of weeping, chiding, exclaiming, caressing, ensued. It required a strong effort for Sir Reginald to tear himself away at the very time when Florinda seemed more his own than ever she had been ; when his love for her burst the barrier that had hitherto suppressed it, and without explanation all had been explained, for all was understood and forgiven. Fain would he have lingered, and fainer still would he have accompanied her on her way, and guarded her from the host of rivals that would soon surround her. But having consigned her to the care of her mother, and seen both depart under the guidance of the Duke's servants, he had no longer an excuse for lingering, and with reluctant, though anxious heart, he returned to Inch Orran.

Glenroy's impatience all this while knew no bounds. Captain Malcolm had gone in person to

relieve his anxiety, and to inform him, without entering into particulars, that as Edith had been so much alarmed, there was a necessity for her remaining quietly where she was for the present. The Chief acquiesced, when assured there was no danger to be now apprehended, at the same time expressing great contempt at such womanish weakness. It was, he said, enough to provoke any man of common sense to see a woman giving herself such airs for a puff of wind; but it was all the fault of that silly creature Molly Macauley, who had made a perfect fool of the girl; and then, as usual, his anger was wreaked on that innocent victim. Captain Malcolm then took leave, with reiterated messages to Reginald to come to him immediately, as he could not live without him. On his return he met Sir Reginald, just landed, and communicated to him his uncle's wish—a mark of his affection he could well have dispensed with in the present situation of affairs—to go to Glenroy, as his future son-in-law, at the very time when he had virtually renounced his daughter, and to have his marriage made the perpetual theme, when he knew that, in all probability, that marriage never would take place. It was torture to think of it, and he involuntarily exclaimed—"Impossible! I cannot move from this till I know"—then, recollecting himself, he stopped.

Captain Malcolm perceived his embarrassment and dissatisfaction, which he imputed to a different cause, and he said, "This is indeed hard work for you, Sir

Reginald, to be again called upon to sacrifice your own wishes to a sense of duty, but you may now do it with an easier mind. Miss Malcolm, though very low, it seems is now restored to herself, and I trust will soon be to you. In the meantime, quiet is still necessary, and as you are not likely to promote that in the present state of your feelings, I must therefore be so disinterested as to recommend your returning to poor Glenroy."

"I cannot," said Reginald impatiently.

"It is no very pleasant task I have taken upon myself to press you to leave my house," said his friend good-humouredly; "but I know I need not apologise to you for such a breach of hospitality."

"I am sensible of your good intentions," said Reginald, in a quick, impatient manner; "but you will oblige me by allowing me to judge and act for myself on this occasion. I—in short—" he stopped as if at a loss how to proceed, then added—"But if my remaining here occasions any inconvenience, I shall endeavour to find accommodation for the night elsewhere."

There was no contesting the point any longer. He remained, and the night was passed in a state of gloomy restlessness by him—of sleepless anguish by Edith—griefs differing in kind as in degree; for even amid the reproaches of conscience and the struggles of remorse, as gratitude, tenderness, and pity filled his heart, still the idol passion had erected maintained its sway, and in his imagination shone forth

fair and beauteous, even amid the wreck it had made.

But with Edith all was dimness and desolation. No star shed its light in her path—in her existence there was no object which even hope could for an instant illumine. Amid the darkness that brooded in her heart, heaven and earth, the present and the future, were alike an undistinguishable chaos, and only one dreary hope was hers—the hope of despair. She felt it was impossible she could long exist under such a weight of woe as had overwhelmed her; soon, very soon, she should pass away and be at rest. But she knew not the capacity of the human heart for suffering; she knew not those depths profound, where sorrow, unseen, unsuspected, dwells through many a long life. “*Nous ne connaissons l'infini que par la douleur!*” All the faith of her early days—all the cherished feelings of a lifetime—all the fond gatherings up of woman’s love and tenderness, which she had deemed were treasured in her lover’s heart, had been rudely cast from him as slighted, priceless things; and for an instant her pale cheek glowed at the indignity. But bitter as these feelings were, they were rendered still more so by the thoughts of the disappointment and sorrow that awaited her father. All his proud imaginations to be thus cast down; his hopes laid in the dust, where his own gray head would soon be brought low by the hands which ought to have smoothed the pillow of his old age! And yet it must be! Nought remained for her but to

sever the last feeble link of those ties which, entwined as they were with every feeling of her heart, hung only as a galling yoke on the breast of her false lover. With the courage of despair, she drew from her finger the ring of betrothal—that ring which his faithless hand had placed there, with the vow of eternal constancy, and which, like a talisman, had ever guarded her heart against all fears and suspicions of his fidelity. Even this inanimate object, associated as it was with all the hopes and the joys of her life, it was anguish unspeakable to part with ; her heart recoiled from the deed, and again and again she relinquished the attempt. But then the thought that Reginald might for an instant suppose she still retained her claim upon his hand, even when convinced that his affections were given to another—that was not to be endured ! She hastily folded and sealed the ring in a small packet ; and when Mrs. Malcolm at an early hour entered her apartment, she put it into her hand, and, with forced composure, requested that she would convey it to its destination.

Mrs. Malcolm was not deceived by this assumed fortitude—she saw it was the result of excitement, not of resignation ; it was easy to guess at the contents of the packet, and she said, “I will do anything —anything for you, my love, that can be for your good, but—*must* this be ?”

“It must,” replied Edith, still retaining her composure.

“May there not be some mistake, which a mutual

friend might assist you in clearing up ? Dearest Edith, do not entirely cast away your own happiness, and that of others."

Edith could not speak, and she buried her face in her hands, while her heart heaved with strong emotion.

Mrs. Malcolm tenderly embraced her. "Edith," she said, "I have known and loved you from a child, both for your own sake, and that of our dear Ronald, to whom you were dearer, if possible, than his own sisters. I cannot, then, be silent and see you thus; if you will not confide to me the cause of your distress, will you allow me to hint to you what I fear has happened?"

Edith gasped for a few moments, as if for utterance, then, by a strong effort, said, "We are parted, and *for ever!* Oh, do not ask me more—take that," pointing to the ring, "in mercy take it from my sight!"

Mrs. Malcolm, too wise to persist where she saw such extreme agitation ensue, refrained from urging the topic any further ; but, shocked and distressed as she was, she strove to soothe Edith into greater composure, and then left her, to seek Sir Reginald, for the purpose of executing her commission. On viewing the packet, he hastily tore it open, and at sight of the ring turned pale ; tears sprang from his eyes ; he struck his forehead with his hand, and at length, unable to control the emotion he was unwilling to avow, he rushed from the room, The sight of the ring had awakened a train of remembrances that had long slumbered in his heart. The fair image of Edith,

tender, innocent, and true, rose to his mind's eye. That gentle, loving being—the playfellow of his childhood—the companion of his youth—his once beloved—his betrothed—oh, had he wronged her, and had she renounced him, without one word of reproach !

There are moments when even the master-passion of the soul is overcome by stormy and sudden emotion. And so it was when this mute remembrancer of sweet and happy days reminded him, more eloquently than words could have done, of the vows he had broken, of the joys he had blighted. In the anguish of self-condemnation, it was a relief to him to give utterance to his feelings, by writing to Edith, and with his usual impetuosity, he poured them forth in a strain too agitated and contradictory to meet the eye of any but her to whom it was addressed. While he reviled and denounced himself in the bitterest terms, he, at the same time, sought to extenuate and vindicate his conduct, and while he declared that her happiness was a thousand times more precious to him than his own, he pleaded the overwhelming force of his passion for another as the excuse for his apostasy from her. He returned her the ring ; he besought her to keep it, at least for the present ; he could not, he would not, receive it from her now. A time might come when it might cost them both less to part ; but now it must be with breaking hearts.

Edith's emotion at reading the letter was not less than that with which it had been written ; but her

part was taken with the “courage of a wounded heart.” She answered it.

“The time *has* come when we must part—when we have parted, and for ever. No human power can ever again unite us—no separation can be more complete than that which has already taken place. You cannot recall the past—do not, then, I beseech you, by vain remonstrance; seek still more to embitter the present. Yet in one thing you can gratify me, and it will be my last request. Go to my poor father, bear with him, soothe him for my sake. From me he shall never learn what has passed—he need never hear it from any one else. And when I die—oh, Reginald—by the love you once bore me, do not desert my father in the hour of affliction! be to him all, and more, than I could ever have been! so shall my last prayer be for your happiness.

E. M.”

How often, in the passionate longings of a blinded heart and a wayward fancy, had Reginald wished this time to come—the time when Edith, with her own hand, should set him free! And now that it had come, what were its fruits but bitter tears of sorrow and remorse? What slavery could ever have been half so galling as freedom thus bestowed? And so it must ever be in the accomplishment of all unjust and unhallowed wishes, unless when the heart is callous, and the conscience seared to all the soul’s best attributes. Again he wrote under the influence of strongly-excited feelings.

"Oh, Edith, how your generous forbearance wrings my heart! You say I cannot recall the past--would to God I could, for I could bear all things but the thoughts of having brought sorrow upon you--you who are still dear to me as my own soul. Talk not of dying, dearest Edith, for I swear I will not survive you! With my own hands I will end my hateful existence, rather than live as your destroyer! And there is one who will suffer little less than either of us, when she knows all. She is innocent--indeed she is--of all that has happened. The fault is mine; ah, do not wrong her, then, even in thought! Alas! she knew not what a wretch she loved. I will obey you, cost what it may; I will go to Glenroy, and for your sake I will even play the hypocrite before him; only let me have the satisfaction of serving you, and there is no sacrifice I am not ready to make. Edith, dearest Edith, if we may not be to each other what we have been, at least let me hope that we may one day meet with other, perhaps better, because less mutable feelings than those we once cherished. Oh, let me conjure you, then, to regard yourself, if you would show pity towards one whose life and happiness are wrapped in yours.

R. M."

Edith made no reply, and Reginald returned to Glenroy.

CHAPTER X.

THE faithful Mrs. Macauley lost no time in hastening to her beloved charge ; but she was panic-struck with the change that had already taken place on those cherished features. Edith, indeed, looked a monument of living woe. The overwhelming past already told its tale of misery, of a heart laid waste and desolate, of “spirits broken, joys o'ercast,” and eyes that seemed as though they never more might smile.

Mrs. Macauley had seen in her day the effects of sickness and of sorrow ; but here was something differing from aught she had ever beheld ; and she gazed with affright on the mournful indications of a breaking heart. At length she said, “Oh, my dear, and is not this very dreadful ! what has come over you ? for, my darling, I never saw anything in this world look like you. Oh ! what can it be ?”

“ You will soon know,” said Edith in a hard, unnatural tone, and in her own mind alluding to her death.

“ Well, the sooner the better, my lamb, that we may know what to do ; for I declare I’m frightened to look at you—you’re not like the same creature you was.”

"In the meantime, you will oblige me by taking no notice—by saying nothing about me, either to myself or to anybody else," said Edith, speaking slowly, and with difficulty.

"Oh! my darling, how can I say nothing, when I see you looking like—something I cannot put a name upon? For though your face is as white as a ghost's, it has not the peace and rest that's in a ghost's face." And poor Macky looked wistfully at her.

"It will soon have them, I hope," said Edith, with a smile of anguish. "I have been sick—ill—but it will soon be over."

"But how will it be over, my dear?" looking anxiously in Edith's face, with a bewildered air. Then, as the meaning flashed upon her, she burst into a violent flood of tears. "Oh! my darling," she cried, when at last she was able to articulate, "you don't mean to say you are going to leave us for a better world, and you so young and so happy in this same evil world—and I, that am so old!"—And poor Macky's feelings again burst forth. While the tears rolled down her cheeks, she went on—"But I'm waiting my time patiently; and ought not you to do it too? And well you may, with so much to make you pleased and contented."

"I am contented," said Edith, with a faint, ghastly smile. "Do not, then, distress yourself on my account."

"Not distress myself on your account, my heart's jewel! And how can I not distress myself? But

what does it signify what becomes of me, though my old heart should break, what does that signify? But your poor papa, and your own true love—what will become of them?"

"Do not!" gasped Edith faintly, and waving her hand.

"Oh! my dear, would it not do your heart good to hear how miserable *he* is about you; so miserable, that he is shut up in his own room, and his very door locked, too! except when he goes now and then to Glenroy; and then he looks—'deed he looks not very chancy, as if he was hardly himself. I'm frightened at you both." Then, with a sudden start of joy, she exclaimed, "But I think—I think I can guess what it is! Have not you cast out, my dear, is not that all? Will you not 'gree again? Ay, that you will, or sorrow take me!"

It was some minutes before Edith could command herself sufficiently to speak; at length she said, and her features were almost convulsed in her efforts to appear calm, "I know your kindness; I feel it too; but if you really love me—if you would serve me in the only way you *can* do it, you will not torture me by—" Her voice sank, but she made an effort, and went on—"by mentioning those names. Do not—do not ask me questions! I cannot—I *will not* answer."

"My darling, and then am I not to know what it is that's the matter with you?" cried poor Mrs. Macauley, her eyes twinkling with astonishment through her tears.

"You, nor no one else, can do me any good ; it is *impossible*. I want nothing, I wish nothing—but to be undisturbed."

"Oh, my dearest ! If you did but see yourself in the glass, you would not venture to say that ; for not a bit of your face but tells another tale ; as sure as death, it's the face of a broken heart." And again a flood of tears burst forth.

"And will you not tell me who and what it is that has done it," cried she, throwing her arms round Edith, "when you know I could give my own heart thankfully, if it could bring joy to yours ? And will you not tell me, then, how I'm to do it ?"

Edith disengaged herself from her embrace, and with the paleness of death on her face, but with a calm and resolved air, said, "Yes, look upon me as one already dead—one whom no human power can restore to—" happiness she would have said, but her voice failed, and her lips shrank from pronouncing the rest. "There is one way, and only one, in which you can serve me." And she laid her hand on Mrs. Macauley as she spoke. "Comfort my father—strive to reconcile him to—"

"To what, my darling ?" cried Mrs. Macauley eagerly.

"To the will of God !" said Edith, in a low, deep voice ; and wringing the hand of her poor old friend, she entered her dressing-room and closed the door.

There is a determined character of grief which carries a sacredness and an awe along with it, and

which silences all attempts at consolation. Such was Edith's, and such the effect it produced on the mind of poor Mrs. Macauley, as slowly and reluctantly she relinquished the hope of gaining the confidence and removing the affliction of her beloved charge. She had too much innate delicacy to intrude further upon her privacy. She saw the wound was too deep for her unpractised hand to probe ; but she still hoped the one that had dealt the blow might likewise have the power to stanch the wound. She returned home to seek Sir Reginald, and prevailed upon him to see her alone for a few minutes, in order to represent to him the situation of his betrothed. But her courage almost failed her when she saw the towering, the overwhelming force of mingled grief and passion with which he received her sad and simple annunciation ; and his vehement burst of sorrow was as inexplicable to her as Edith's settled despair.

"Oh, Sir Reginald," she cried, laying her hand on his arm to detain him, "if you would not be affronted at me, I would just say what I think, and then you would tell me if I'm wrong, and then we would get everything put right again ; for 'deed, if it is not done soon, that sweet lamb will go her way to a better world. And oh, if you have only cast out in a common way, what for cannot you 'gree again ? But somehow —I do not know how to say it, I think so much shame of evenin' you to such a thing ! But I've taken it into my head that—'deed, I never liked that French-woman—I thought she had a very curious look with

her eye—I did not like it ; and I thought sometimes there was something, I could not tell what, going on : and to think how she used to take upon her to disparage Miss Edith, before your face too ! And now I may just as well tell you at once that I cannot help thinking it's she that has made all this mischief between you and your own true love !”

Sir Reginald's only reply was to dash from him the hand which would have sought to detain him ; and, rushing from her in agony of excited feeling, he sought to stifle the upbraidings of his heart by again pouring it forth, with all its incoherencies and inconsistencies, to Edith, and supplicating her again to forgive and forget the past, even while his every word proclaimed the struggle of his mind, as passion and pity alternately prevailed. He spoke of the tortures he endured by remaining at Glenroy, where every object reminded him of his lost happiness, and of the baseness of submitting to practise a deception against which his soul recoiled.

Edith felt all this as only an aggravation of her wretchedness. Worlds now would not have tempted her to become the wife of him she loved—for even in renouncing she still loved him. And there is perhaps no anguish more acute, no struggle more severe, than when called upon to despise and abjure the object of our once—of our still tender affection. Yet, to the youthful heart, there is a charm in extreme mental suffering—a luxury of woe, which makes us reject with scorn all that could lessen or alleviate it. Were

the burden less, we might strive even in our own strength to cast it from us ; but when the spirit seems fairly crushed beneath its overwhelming weight, it requires no effort to support it ; and, paradoxical as it may appear, we passively yield to what we at the same time feel to be insupportable. Such is the effect calamity produces on some minds, while others are stimulated to seek relief from the galling pressure, whose iron has entered their souls—alas ! as if only to fester and corrode them. So it was with Reginald —inaction was intolerable to him ; in the feverish excitement of his mind he again wrote to Edith ; but his letter was not answered. He went to Inch Orran, and demanded to see her ; but she resisted his importunities. In a transport of mingled passions, which it would not have been easy to analyse, he left the house, but instead of returning to Glenroy, he departed to Dunshiera.

CHAPTER XI.

“SORROW is a sacred thing,” but when carried to excess, it is also a selfish thing. In the first excitement of feeling, Edith had felt for others as well as for herself; and the thoughts of her father’s disappointment had added bitterness to her own. But now she heard he was ill—bed-rid—with comparatively little emotion; for to violent sorrow had succeeded a sort of heartless stupefaction, and her mind had sunk into a state of melancholy, which seemed to render her either insensible or indifferent to everything. Hers was become

“A grief without a pang, void, dark, and drear,
A stifled, drowsy, unimpassion’d grief,
Which finds no natural outlet or relief,
In word, or sigh, or tear.”

Pride now seemed the only feeling alive in that heart where once had dwelt all the sweetest, softest emotions. And pride would sometimes give an indignant throb, and light up her languid eye and suffuse her pale cheek, and she would struggle to cast off the load with which memory weighed her spirit down. But hers was not a proud nature, and the faint effort

was only succeeded by deeper dejection. The buoyancy of life and hope seemed fled ; yet there is in youth a tenacity of both, which rarely, if ever, relinquishes its hold of either. Unnoticed and unsuspected by its possessor, the mind, even in its darkest state, is still languishing for light, still putting forth new shoots, even though it may not discern the object to which it may yet attach itself.

Mrs. Malcolm knew enough of human nature to be aware of this. Though gentle and unobtrusive, she was judicious and unremitting in her efforts to call forth the latent energies of the soul, and direct them to higher and more permanent sources of happiness. But all who have ever striven to stem or turn the current of afflictions, whose channel is in the very depths of the heart, well know how laborious, and apparently hopeless, is the task when no other fount is open to receive them.

Edith was naturally reserved in her disposition ; and although, in the first anguish of her feelings, she had betrayed, rather than divulged, the secret of her heart to Mrs. Malcolm, to no one else had she, or would she, breathe even a sigh of regret. She rarely, indeed, ever alluded to the subject even to her friend ; still she felt it was soothing to her to be with one who knew what was passing in her mind, even when the mind itself was closed against all communication. The history of her whole life seemed as if all compressed into that single event ; and there was an indolent, melancholy pleasure in being with one who

knew that history, and silently sympathised in it. But she wished no one else to share in that knowledge—participate in those feelings ; she was jealous almost of the appearance of it. While, on the other hand, if the happy, light-hearted girls sought to win her to their occupations and amusements, the sight of their gaiety, contrasted with her own wretchedness, only served to estrange her from them the more. The only member of the family, besides Mrs. Malcolm, in whose society she seemed to take the slightest pleasure, was the youngest boy ; in his beauty, in the sweetness of his disposition, in his every look and expression, he reminded her of her favourite play-fellow, the warm-hearted, generous Ronald. She endured his presence when all others seemed distasteful ; and Mrs. Malcolm hoped that when the current of her affections should once more begin to flow, her young favourite might again become an object of interest to her. But she knew, for she had experienced, that for the afflictions of life there exists but one genuine fountain of consolation—the assured belief that all our earthly sorrows and our transitory sufferings are ordained by unerring Wisdom and infinite Love. And where this belief exists, the darts of anguish, however they may pierce, will never fix and rankle in the soul.

Edith had religious feeling, but she had not religious principle ; and thus, what might have been the medicine to check and mitigate the fever of her heart, had served rather as the aliment to feed and pamper its sickly sensibilities. With all this pertinacity of

suffering, however, she refused nothing that was required of her ; but her compliances seemed those of a body without a soul—all was calm, but all was joyless and hopeless as the slumber of the dead. It was from this state of rigid melancholy that Mrs. Malcolm was anxious to recover Edith. It was possible the sight of her father might produce a strong impression ; but in her present state she feared the effect of any violent perturbation of the spirits, and was desirous that she should remain under her own eye till her mind had regained somewhat of its natural tone.

As a gentle mode of experiment, she one day proposed to her to accompany her on a visit to a poor couple who had lately lost a daughter, their only child ; and, from the character of the people, she was in hopes a salutary influence might be imparted, even from their lowly shed. Edith agreed to the proposal with the same vacant, preoccupied look with which she assented to everything that was suggested to her—a look which told more plainly than words could have done that all scenes, whether of pain or pleasure, were now alike to her. Their destination was to a cottage in a wild secluded glen, or rather a hollow of the bleak and sterile mountains which surrounded it. Edith remembered it well. It was the same she had pointed out to Florinda on their way to church. But how different were her feelings then from what they were now ! Then there was delight in every breeze—joy in every sunbeam. Life needed no stimulants to give it a zest ; all was excitement—

the excitement of youthful sensation—the glow of a happy heart. Now all was changed ; the sunbeam that had gilded the illusion was fled, and only the dark vapour remained ; now she was ready to exclaim, with her own mountain-bard, “The narrow house is pleasant to me, and the gray stone of the dead.” As she gazed on the lonely cottage, Florinda’s words recurred to her with a bitter pang, “Love might transform even that wretched hut into a bower of paradise.” “*Could* she love him more than I did ?” thought she. “Oh no, no ! she might love him differently, but she could not love him more !” Mrs. Malcolm marked with satisfaction the glow of animation, agonised as it was, which crossed her features as the whole scene came vividly to her mind. Anything was better than the state of lifeless melancholy in which she had so long been sunk, just as that pain is salutary which denotes returning animation.

“ You look with affright on that dreary dwelling, I perceive,” said Mrs. Malcolm.

“ Yes,” said Edith aloud, as she continued to gaze with a sad and abstracted air ; “she said true, to dwell there *would* be paradise, compared to——” And she sighed, as though her heart was breaking.

“ Do you believe there is such a thing as paradise on earth, Edith ?” said her friend gently, seeking to turn her thoughts from the direction she perceived they had taken.

“ Once I did,” said Edith in the same thrilling tone of anguish.

"And even in that wretched hut?"

"Ay, anywhere."

"And you have discovered the fallacy of your expectations?" Edith was silent.

"You are not singular, my love," said her friend; "we all set out in life with the hope of creating for ourselves a paradise on earth, and all, sooner or later, live to mourn the vain—the unhallowed expectation."

"Not all," said Edith bitterly.

"All—all—be assured, it is so ordained; and those who have grasped at happiness have found it either a shadow or a shroud. So it has ever been, and so it will ever be."

"Are not you happy?" inquired Edith, with more of interest than she had for a long while evinced.

"Resigned—contented—grateful—these, I hope, I am," answered her friend; "but happy I am not, according to my ideas of felicity."

"Yet *you* have everything, while I——" she stopped, choked with emotion.

"But everything here below is imperfect, and in its nature fraught with anxiety and sorrow. And—shall I own my weakness—my sinfulness?—Even in the midst of the many blessings with which you see me surrounded, still, still my heart yearns for my long-lost boy! still a haunting mystery seems to me to hang over his fate. Still a false, delusive voice whispers to me at times, that perhaps he still lives—lives a captive or a slave! Judge, then, whether I can be what you would call happy."

"But he was not your *all*," said Edith, with agitation.

"Ah, Edith, is there any of us whose *all* centres in one frail, perishable creature? Has God given us affections, and feelings, and capacities of enjoyment, to be *all* lavished exclusively on one object—and that object not Himself?"

"It may be sinful, but—but I cannot help it," said Edith in a despairing accent.

"No, dearest, you cannot help it, but God will help you. Only be assured He loves you with a love inconceivably beyond that which any creature ever has felt, or ever can feel for you—and your heart will no longer remain closed against the consolations He offers you. Ah! Edith, it was when the doors were shut that He who came to succour and to save stood in the midst of His disciples; and 'tis when the heart is closed against all earthly consolation that divine love still finds entrance."

Edith's only answer was a sigh; and Mrs. Malcolm wisely forbore to press the subject further at present. They therefore proceeded in silence till they reached the lonely hut. It is rarely that anything of what sentimentalists call an interesting nature is to be met with amid the coarse avocations of humble life; yet the elements of suffering and of feeling are the same in all ranks, and the short and simple annals of the poor sometimes contain much of Christian faith and moral beauty. They were met at the door of the cottage by a middle-aged man,

with grizzled hair, and a countenance which bore the impress of deep and recent sorrow. Mrs. Malcolm accosted him in kindly accents, but a respectful bow was the only answer he at first seemed able to return. She next inquired for his wife ; and making a strong effort, as he drew his hand across his eyes, he said—and his voice seemed ready to fail him as he spoke :—"Nelly's no just as she should be, my leddy ; she's no just hersell yet."

" You don't mean, Duncan, that her mind has been unsettled by her loss ?"

" Oh no—no, my leddy—God be praised—no so bad as that ! she aye knew the hand that was dealing wi' her ; she never lost sight o' that—His name be praised ! but step in, my leddy, and you'll see her as she is, poor thing !"

Mrs. Malcolm and Edith entered the lonely dwelling, where sat the childless mother, with a Bible on her knees. At sight of them she hastily rose, and turning away, covered her face with her hands and wept.

" You'll excuse her, my leddy," said poor Duncan, with emotion.

" I ought to ask Nelly to excuse me for disturbing her perhaps too soon," said Mrs. Malcolm gently.

" Oh, my leddy !" was all Duncan could say. Nelly turned round, and while with one hand she strove to stem the tears as they flowed profusely over her face, with the other she wiped down the seats for her guests, then tried to speak, but only her lips moved.

Then, as if disappointed at the failure, she again turned away, and gave free course to her sorrow.

"It's just because she has not seen you, my leddy, since *she* was ta'en frae us," said Duncan, struggling to master his own feelings, while the workings of his features betrayed what it cost him.

"But it's ower now," said Nelly, with a sigh. "It was just a heart-stound, my leddy, that's past and awa'." And she turned round with a sad but composed air. There was not much of external beauty in the aspects of this poor couple to excite the feelings; but simple sorrow is always touching, and even Edith felt interested as she looked on the desolate pair, bereft of their stay, and seemingly devoid of all those outward sources of consolation, which, though they in reality minister little or no relief to the lone mourner, yet seem as if they ought to mitigate the bitterness of affliction. But here were none of the appliances of artificial refinement, either within doors or without. The brown heath, the dreary mountain, and the wild streamlet, were the only objects that surrounded them. All else was silence and solitude.

"Have you had a visit from the minister yet?" inquired Mrs. Malcolm.

"You'll mean Mr. Stuart, my leddy?—Ay, oh ay, 'deed we've had that, and muckle need we had o' him, for 'we were sorely unwilling—oh, 'deed were we —to give *her* back to Him that gave her to us," and Duncan's eyes moistened with tears as he spoke.

"That is a natural feeling, Duncan," said Mrs.

Malcolm, “and mercifully it is not a forbidden one—we *may* mourn the loss of those we love, only ‘not as those who have no hope.’”

“Ay, that’s just it, my leddy; for as the blessed King David said in his distress, ‘I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.’ That’s a grand promise, my leddy; but oh, there’s a sad thought too!”

“It is so; but the hope set before us is so full of consolation that it must strengthen our hearts to hear the mournful truth which nature will proclaim to us in the time of our affliction.”

“Oh, is na that true, Nelly?” said Duncan, trying to speak cheeringly to his wife.

Nelly pointed to a tartan plaid or screen which hung against the wall, and had long belonged to her daughter; and while tears trickled down her cheek, she bent her head, and said, “God’s will be done!”

“And His will is, Nelly,” said Mrs. Malcolm, “that we should make Him the sure and steadfast anchor of our souls—that we should turn our thoughts as much as possible from the grave, which holds merely the perishable body of the spirit we loved, to Him who dwelleth in light and glory, and in whose presence that spirit, we may hope, is now enjoying perfect and endless felicity. I, like you, have known what it is to lose a child, and still, often—too often—the melancholy thought will rise, ‘He shall not return to me;’ but God has said, ‘I shall go to him.’ We know that all things that befall us are ordained of God, and will work together for the good of our immortal souls, and

we cannot tell—perhaps it is the very separation we so much mourn, that may be the appointed means of reuniting us again, for ever, to the friend we loved—for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also."

"Do you hear that, Nelly?" inquired Duncan anxiously.

"Deed, it may be so, and it's a blessed thought, ony wise," said Nelly, brightening up a little.

"Ay, many are the blessings we have to be thankful for, Nelly, though our ungrateful hearts refuse to own them, when a part's taken away from us," said Duncan. "We have His power above us and around us," added he reverently, "and His word before us, and His spirit within us; and are na these great blessings for sinful creatures like us?"

"They are indeed, Duncan," said Mrs. Malcolm; "and you have well chosen that better part which shall not be taken away from you. But perhaps it might be of service to Nelly were you to leave your home for a while; yours is a lonely dwelling; you have no friends near to speak a word of comfort to you now and then, and the winter is approaching when you will feel still more desolate. Donald M'Intyre's cottage is now empty, and you will find it more comfortable than your own; besides, you will be nearer both to Inch Orran and your good minister, Mr. Stuart."

"They would be great comforts, to be sure," said Duncan; "but——" he stopped, and his wife and he

looked at each other ; but their looks betokened no gladness at the proposal.

"Oh no—no, my leddy," said Nelly ; "mony thanks to you, and mony blessings be upon you for a' you've done for us frae first to last ; but we couldna be better ; we wadna be sae weel onywhere as we're here ; we need nae company, my leddy ; we're the best company to ane anither, for we can speak o' our bairn, our bonny Jeanie, and we can see a'thing that she used to see, and the braid sun and the bonny moon shinin' upon us just as they used to do when she was here—oh, I dinna think they wad hae the same look to me onywhere else !"

Mrs. Malcolm forbore to urge the proposal, as they both seemed to retain so strong a local attachment for the scenes, bleak and sterile as they were, which had once been gladdened by the presence of their child ; and the feeling is a natural one to such as have felt that "there is joy in grief, when peace dwells in the breast of the sad ;" and where the heart has laid down what it most loved, there it is also desirous of laying itself down.

"This is no bower of paradise, you perceive," said Mrs. Malcolm to Edith, as they quitted the cottage ; "but it is something better—it is the abode of Christian faith and hope."

CHAPTER XII.

EDITH's feelings had been touched by the scene she had witnessed, and on the way home she conversed upon it more freely, and with greater interest than she had recently done upon any subject.

When she returned to Inch Orran she found the following letter had arrived in her absence :—

" **MY DARLING**—I hope you will not be frightened, though 'deed I am not very easy myself, for we are such curious creatures that we cannot tell what may happen—and maybe it is better we should not, for 'we know not what a day may bring forth.' Oh ! if it would bring a good hearty fit of the gout into his feet, what a mercy that would be ; for I do not like its wander, wandering this way up and down his whole body, and never resting in one place. I mean your own papa, my dear, for he is really not what he should be ; and what frightens me most of all, he is so remarkably good-natured and easily pleased, not but what he was always good and kind to me ; but it would melt a heart of stone to hear how gently he speaks now. 'Deed I could not help crying this morning when he held out his hand to me, and said,

in such a soft voice, ‘Molly,’ says he, ‘you are not a bad creature, after all.’ ‘What makes you think that Glenroy?’ said I; for you know we are all bad creatures, the best of us. ‘Ay, you stick by me when *they* have deserted me,’ says he.—Was not that good of him? But though I was so pleased, I was vexed too, that he should think anybody could desert him; and so I took the liberty of saying, ‘Oh, Glenroy, you know I will stick to you with my dying breath, and so will everybody that you please to have about you.’ And then he shook his head, and said—‘No, no, Molly, nobody thinks of pleasing me now—they’re both gone and left me, and the sooner I go the better—and I’ve nobody now but you, Molly, and you’ll be going off too some of these days.’ And then he rambled and spoke, as if he thought I was going off—and poor Benbowie too! I was really hurt at that, though I knew he did not intend it. When he wakens out of his sleep, he often calls for you, and another person too, and he thinks, good man, that you are gone away together; so how he will be pleased to see you by yourself, I cannot tell, for I do not know—but I know it is children’s duty to obey their parents, which you always did, I’m sure, and take care of them when they are sick, and be kind to them in their old age; and maybe it would comfort you to think that you had been a comfort to him. And even if you should vex him by coming, is not that better than to vex him by staying away? Surely, I think it is. I hope you understand this and that

I have made myself plain to you ; but I cannot be very sure of what I am saying, for I am not just so heartsome as I used to be, and is not that extraordinary when there's nobody but Benbowie and me to divert Glenroy, and him in his bed, so dull, good man ! but who knows but if you please to come back, we will all come right again ; for I pray he may be spared to us yet, and that I may get many a good scold from him, good and kind as he has always been to me ! I hope you will be pleased with my letter, and all that I have said, which is the truth, from, my darling,

“ Your old and true friend,

“ M. MACAULEY.”

Edith shed tears on reading this homely effusion, the first she had shed for many weeks, and Mrs. Malcolm hailed them with pleasure, as the harbingers of renovated feelings which had too long lain dormant in her heart. It required an effort to resolve upon returning home to encounter the heartrending interrogatories which she was aware must be awaiting her —which she felt it would be death to her father to answer truly, and which she yet knew not how she should evade. It was a trial from which she shrank, but which she nevertheless now felt it her duty to undergo, and Mrs. Malcolm confirmed her in the resolution.

“ It is assuredly your duty, my dear,” said Mrs. Malcolm ; “ and when we are convinced of that, we

have only to commit the event to God. The *motive* only is ours—the consequences are His; and His command is, that you forsake not your father when he is old and gray-headed. Ah, Edith, account it a privilege and a blessing to be the comfort of your father's old age!"

"That I can never be," said Edith. "I can never be otherwise in his eyes than the cause of sorrow and disappointment—" She stopped in emotion.

"But even that very sorrow and disappointment may be the means of producing a salutary influence on your father's mind. You may be the instrument in the hand of God to work a good work; not, indeed, as we would work in our weakness and ignorance, but according to His wisdom and love; for you yourself I have no fears—you are going to your duty, and will, I doubt not, be enabled to fulfil it. Go, then, dearest—do what you *can*, and leave it to God to do as He *will*."

Mrs. Malcolm had too much sense not to know that when an exertion is to be made we can do it more effectually when left to ourselves, than when another is at hand to whom we have been accustomed to cling for support and assistance; and that more minds are rendered helpless from the mistaken and injudicious tenderness of friends, than by being left to their own resources and exertions. She therefore wisely forbore to offer her assistance at this time.

Edith was now anxious and impatient to be gone, even while her heart recoiled at the thoughts of her

return. The preparation having been quickly made, she took an agitated farewell of Inch Orran and its affectionate inmates, and ere the tumult of her spirit had subsided, she found herself once more within the dear domain of Glenroy. But, ah! how changed to her was now Glenroy! Yet as its fondly-pictured scenes again met her eye, the visions of her early days also rose to view. For a brief moment, her heart cast off the burden of its woes; and as memory gave back, in all their brightness, the happy days she had spent amid those very scenes, the past only seemed reality.

But quickly the illusion vanished, and was succeeded by bitter recollections and humiliating thoughts. She had lately left that home the beloved, the betrothed of Reginald, and she now returned to it the slighted, forsaken daughter of Glenroy.

But even these feelings were suspended when the carriage drove up to the Castle, and she beheld dismay and alarm painted on the countenances of the servants as they hurried to and fro.

“What has happened?” she called faintly to the housekeeper, who was stationed to receive her.

“Don’t be frightened, ma’am; but Glenroy has had, about an hour ago, a—a—a stroke of the palsy, ma’am, and has lost——”

Edith waited to hear no more; with a wild exclamation, she rushed forward, regardless of the voice of the servant, who sought to detain her, and in another minute was by the side of her father’s couch.

CHAPTER XIII.

THERE lay Glenroy, speechless, his features slightly distorted, but the expression calm and apparently tranquil ; and on one side sat Benbowie, with a face of dull, sorrowful amazement ; and on the other was poor Mrs. Macauley, tears flowing profusely over her face, while she stroked, with childish fondness, the powerless hand of her beloved Chief.

“Oh, my dear, this is no a sight for you!” cried she to Edith ; “’deed it’s as much as my old, hard heart can do to stand it. But it’s God’s will, and a punishment for my sins, and so I do not complain ;” and a torrent of tears gushed forth.

Glenroy opened his eyes, and at sight of Edith smiled complacently, then cast an inquiring look around, and vainly tried to articulate ; but his meaning was sufficiently apparent.

“It’s our own darling Miss Edith come back,” said Mrs. Macauley, hastily brushing away her tears, and speaking fondly to him ; “and somebody else will come too, and then, please God, you’ll be yourself again, Glenroy, and we’ll all be as happy as ever.” Then in a low voice to Edith, “Cheer up, my darling,

and do not let your papa see your distress ; but try to put some heart in him, though I'm but a silly creature myself." As the tears again burst forth— " 'Deed I think Benbowie has more sense and discretion than any of us, for he's just what he always was.'

"Why—oh, why was I not told of this sooner ?" cried Edith, in an agony of self-reproach, as she bent over her father's almost lifeless form.

"Oh, my dear, we could not tell you, for we did not know what was to happen ourselves ! Oh, what creatures we are ! We know not what a day may bring forth. I little thought yesterday, when I wrote my letter to you, of what was coming ; and when I sent it away this morning I thought him better, and more like himself than he had been for a long time, though, to be sure, I had a very extraordinary dream."

"Then when did it happen ? Have you sent for medical assistance ?" cried Edith distractedly.

"Oh, compose yourself, my dear !" cried the poor weeping Macky. "Yes—yes, the doctor has been sent for, and so has—but I'm so confused, I hardly know what I'm about. Did you ask when it happened ? When was it, Benbowie ?"

"It was just five-and-twenty minutes past two—just," replied Benbowie.

"Ay—and he was just sitting there in his chair, and I was chatting to him, and trying to please him ; but I suppose I had said something that had not pleased him ; for he said in his own way, says he, 'Molly Macauley, you are a stupid, old, ignorant'—

and then he stopped ; so I waited a little to hear what more was coming, but no more said he. So says I, ‘Well, what else, Glenroy ? for you may call me what you please—I know very well what you mean by it—so it’s all tint that falls by,’ but not a word. Well, I was winding a clue, and so I just went on, and I forgot myself so far as to be singing, and you know Glenroy never could bear my singing ; and so when I remembered that, I stopped and begged his pardon—but then when he did not begin to scold me, I began to feel very queer, somehow—and so I looked at him—as sure as death, there he was just as you see him now—and oh, not a word, good or bad, has he ever spoken since !” then a fresh flood of tears concluded poor Molly’s narrative.

“My dear, dear papa ! what can I do for you ?” cried Edith, throwing herself on her knees by the couch, and laying her face close to his, as though she strove to read his wishes there. Glenroy uttered some inarticulate sounds, and again rolled his eyes as if in search of some one.

Edith felt the appeal with agony.

“Well, that’s something,” cried Mrs. Macauley joyfully ; “and I know who he’s looking for—ay, that I do ; and if he had but his will, I really think he would come all right. ’Deed, I would not wonder if all this has happened just because he has not got his own way—good man that he is ; but I wager that he’ll get it yet, and that I’ll give him an agreeable surprise before it’s long. So be as composed as you

can, my darling ; and now that you've seen your papa, if you would please to go and rest yourself, and take something, for oh, my dear lamb, you look very white and ill."

The doctor came, and did what he could, but to little purpose. Glenroy remained much the same, and it was only at sight of Edith, or at the sound of her voice, that any difference was perceptible ; but then he always revived, and made an effort to express by words or signs a meaning which she but too well guessed.

"Well, I really think an agreeable surprise will have a great effect on Glenroy," said Mrs. Macauley ; "I'm sure it always does me good ; but I doubt we cannot have it till to-morrow forenoon at the soonest, for that slow creature Benbowie has only sent away his letter half-an-hour ago."

The letter which was intended to produce this agreeable surprise was from Benbowie to Sir Reginald, and even with its omissions and blunders, was the most correct and intelligible Benbowie had ever penned.

"DEAR SIR—I have the misfortune to acquaint you that Glenroy has this morning had a stroke of the palsy, which deprived him of, and took place at twenty-five minutes past two P.M., when sitting in his room. I think it my duty to acquaint you with this stroke, that you may do what you think proper ; no one here being authorised to act under this stroke for you. With much grief, I am, dear sir, faithfully yours,

"LACH. MALCOLM."

It found Sir Reginald at Dunshiera, where he still remained, a prey to conflicting passions;—at one moment ready to fly to Florinda, to claim her as his own, and, in so doing, ensure their mutual happiness, beyond the power of fortune; at the next, yielding to pity for Edith and Glenroy;—then fired by pride, as he thought how the world would say he had broken his vows, and deserted the poor, portionless Edith for her wealthy, titled rival. Such was the state of his mind, when the intelligence (as he naturally concluded) of his uncle's death reached him, and for the moment overwhelmed him with feelings of the deepest sorrow and remorse. Having learned, however, from the servant, that Glenroy still lived, he lost no time in setting off, late as was the hour when the express reached him, and having travelled during the night, he arrived by sunrise the following morning. Anxious to avoid disturbing the family at so early an hour, he gained admittance as quietly as possible, and finding only one of the inferior servants yet stirring, from whom he could obtain little information, he went directly and softly to the sick chamber.

Edith had taken some hours' rest, but had risen with the light of day to resume her station by her father's side, and to relieve the faithful Mrs. Macauley, who had watched there the live-long night, and who now with difficulty consented to retire to an adjoining apartment to take a little repose. She had dismissed the servants also, who had been in attendance, and remained alone by the sick-bed. A chink of an open

shutter showed a scene without, in striking contrast with that which was passing within the closed curtains. There, all nature was awaking into new existence beneath the glories of the rising sun,—here life seemed passing away amid clouds and darkness. The natural train of mournful, but salutary reflections arose in her mind, as she gazed on the powerless form and pallid features of the proud lord of all the goodly scene which smiled in vain around him. The spirit which still lingered in the body—what was, what might be passing there? Was it still grovelling amid scenes of low-born cares? Was it even now “steeped in forgetfulness”? Or was it already hovering on the confines of immortality, preparing to render up its account of the deeds done in the body? Oh, questions of deep and awful import! At these thoughts she sank on her knees, and poured forth her supplications in all the fervour of a feeling and a sorrowful heart. In the intensity of her devotion, she heard not the low taps twice repeated of some one asking admittance at the door, nor was aware that it had been slowly and softly opened, and that some one was present, but shaded from view by the folds of the curtains, till, as she rose from her knees, she perceived that Reginald stood before her. At any other time, Edith would have been overpowered by so sudden and unexpected a meeting; but now her mind had been strengthened and calmed by the pious exercises in which she had been engaged, and the solemn circumstances under which they met by the death-

bed, as she believed, of her father, banished all lesser and more selfish considerations. Her cheek, 'tis true, was very pale, and a slight tremor shook her whole frame; yet she betrayed little emotion, and merely bent her head in return to Sir Reginald's salutation, while he, in extreme agitation, addressed a few almost inarticulate words of apology for the intrusion he had been guilty of. But at the first sound of his voice, Glenroy opened his eyes with an expression of pleasure, and the working of his features, and the heaving of his breast, for a few moments, denoted the efforts he was making to express the satisfaction he felt. At length, with one mighty gasp, he emphatically articulated "Reginald!" "Thank heaven!" Edith would have said, but her utterance failed her. A thousand emotions mingled in her heart at hearing this once cherished name, so long banished from her lips, from her ear, now suddenly operating as a spell to arouse her father from death to life; she shuddered, —she became dizzy with conflicting feelings; after vainly struggling to master them, she fell senseless on the floor. Reginald called loudly for assistance, in his alarm for Edith entirely overlooking Glenroy, who continued gasping and struggling for further utterance. In an instant Mrs. Macauley was in the room, and, all aghast at the spectacle that presented itself, she for the first time in her life stood transfixed in silent amazement—Edith, the image of death, supported in the arms of Reginald, and Glenroy writhing in all the agonies of impotent irritability.

"Do come here," called Sir Reginald, beckoning to her to assist in bearing Edith to a sofa.

"M—M—Molly," stuttered Glenroy.

"Oh!" exclaimed she in rapture, "what a joyful sound!" She stood for a moment suspended between the two. "I declare I do not know which hand of me to turn to, I'm so happy, and so sorry, and so—But oh, what a blessing to think Glenroy has got his tongue again! Oh, what's this has come over her? 'Deed, it has been just this agreeable surprise. But see, she's coming to; Sir Reginald, hold up her head on your arm—and—there's no fear but what all will come right yet;" and off trotted the well-meaning but mistaken Mrs. Macauley to the other end of the chamber, to the side of her beloved Chief.

When Edith opened her eyes she found herself supported by Sir Reginald, and the sight of the pity and distress depicted on his countenance instantly recalled her to a sense of her situation. The blush of wounded pride quickly mantled her cheeks as she withdrew herself from his support.

"You feel better now, do you not?" inquired Reginald anxiously. Edith's heart thrilled, as the tenderness of the accent recalled the remembrance of former days. For a few minutes she remained silent, gradually regaining her self-possession, till at length she was able to say, "The sound of papa's voice had a strange effect upon me, and I fear my weakness must have agitated him. Pray leave me; I am now well." But Reginald still wavered.

"Oh, Sir Reginald, will you come here?" called Mrs. Macauley, while Glenroy vainly strove to repel her officious cares and to recall his nephew. Glenroy's energies had been dormant but not extinguished, and the sight of Reginald had awakened them from the lethargy into which they had sunk. "Oh! did not I tell you," cried she, all vibrating with joy, "what an effect an agreeable surprise would have upon poor Glenroy? 'Deed, I think it was very clever in me to have found that out!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THERE was a new trial for Edith, and one she had little anticipated. Glenroy, helpless, fatuous, and almost speechless, was more despotic than ever, and was never satisfied unless when Reginald and she were before him. Enough could be gathered from his broken and imperfect expressions to know that the theme uppermost in his mind was their marriage, and thus the situation of both parties was one of the most painful embarrassment. But for either of them to leave him was impossible, in the critical state he was then in, when the slightest opposition to his wishes would in all probability have been attended with the most fatal consequences. Although, in obedience to her father's commands, she gave him much of her company when Reginald was present, she carefully avoided all occasions of being alone with the latter; and when they met at meals, she strove as much as possible to maintain the unvarying calm politeness of manner which was merely due towards her father's guest. But dearly was the struggle maintained, and many was the bitter tear shed in secret, when the chords of high-strained exertion were for a moment relaxed.

So passed several days, during which Glenroy made such progress towards recovery that he was now able to sit up, and even to converse, or rather talk, pretty much in his usual strain, only his mind was still weaker, his ideas more confused, and his temper more irritable than ever. His idolatry for his heir and his fondness for Edith had also increased, so that he could not endure either of them to be out of his sight ; fortunately he dozed and slept much during the day, when they, of course, were released from their thraldom, otherwise it would scarcely have been possible for them to have endured the torture of being associated together in Glenroy's company. It were endless to detail the absurdities and inconsistencies of a mind in its dotage. Sir Reginald at first bore them with compassionate forbearance and kindness of manner ; but his patience became exhausted, and he now frequently testified his weariness and irritation in a manner which wounded Edith to the quick.

One day, when Sir Reginald and she were sitting by him, listening to, or at least hearing, old stories of the cutting of the woods, the black pony, etc. etc., a servant entered, to say that Mr. M'Dow and Mrs. M'Dow were in the drawing-room. Edith turned pale, Sir Reginald uttered an exclamation of disgust, and Glenroy, catching the name, repeated "M'Dow—M'Dow. Ay, that's he, that's he—the—the what do you call it?—the that—Edith, you know very well what I mean—the man that marries you—the, the minister! And what for should he not come and

marry you and Reginald just now? Tell Mr. M'Dow," he called to the servant, "to come here and bring the—the—the—" But Edith heard no more, for she hastily rose and quitted the room. But feeling there would be no safety under the same roof with Mr. M'Dow, she hurried out by a private door, which passed from her father's anteroom, upon the terrace.

Instinctively she sought refuge in a part of the grounds, which, if not the most remote, was at least the most inaccessible, in the vicinity of the Castle. It was a little, wild, rocky dell, which, from having been left pretty much in its natural state, had ever been the favourite resort of the children of the family. There was a little brook in which they might wade or angle, or sail their tiny boats, without risk of drowning; and there were hazels for nutting, and mountain-ash for bows and arrows; and there were brambles and sloes, and juniper-berries in abundance, and stones for tables; and, in short, everything to delight the heart of happy, unsophisticated childhood. Here many a joyous day Edith had passed with her young companions, Reginald and Norman and Ronald. In compliment to her predilection for this spot, Reginald, before he went abroad, had caused a rustic temple to be erected there, lined with various-coloured moss, and their initials entwined with such quaint devices, and in as skilful a manner as the nature of the materials permitted. Here, too, the evening before they parted, he had taken Edith to view this trophy

of his love, and then they had each planted at the entrance a honeysuckle and a wild rose. Duly were these tended, and fondly were they watched by her during his long absence, and they had grown and flourished to their utmost luxuriance ; but the sweetness of both was past for the season, and they now only hung their long slender branches in mournful penury, while their seared and yellow leaves lay scattered around, and the gay summer brook, now swelled by autumnal rains into a turbid stream, murmured and gurgled hoarsely along. With sad and faltering steps Edith approached the spot fraught with so many overwhelming recollections—each bush, each stone, told its voiceless tale of perished life, of beauty turned to dust, of love and hope changed to gall and wormwood. The very silence that surrounded her spoke more eloquently than words could have done of the desolation of all things. She entered the mossy bower so long her favourite retreat, and gave way to the melancholy that oppressed her. Amid these scenes, it was almost a luxury to weep ; it seemed as though these mute witnesses of her early pleasures were now become the sympathetic depositaries of her maturer sorrows. Heedless of time, she remained sunk in mournful abstraction, till roused by a dog rushing in and bounding upon her, with all the ardour of attachment. It was a favourite pointer of Reginald's, which she had petted almost to spoiling in his absence, and the faithful creature never failed, when at liberty, to fly to her, and lavish his caresses

on the gentle hand that had so often fed and fondled him. Soon after, Reginald's voice was heard calling loudly to the dog, and presently he entered with his gun in his hand, in pursuit, as it appeared, of the runaway. At sight of Edith he stopped, and colouring said, "I did not expect—I was not aware—I—" then, as if to cover his confusion, he broke into expressions of anger against his dog, and advanced as if to strike him; but the animal crouched close to Edith.

"Pray do not hurt poor Bran," she said, stooping over him to hide the tears which still hung round her eyes.

"He is become a mere useless, good-for-nothing cur," said Reginald, giving him a shove with his foot, and evidently bent upon keeping up his ill-humour; "'tis provoking to see a good dog so completely ruined—I shall certainly have him shot."

Edith's heart swelled at the harsh, unfeeling manner in which Reginald spoke; but she tried to be calm, while she said, "I fear 'tis I who am in fault more than poor Bran—my fondness for him—" she stopped.

"Has been his ruin," said Reginald.

There was something in the tone and manner in which this was uttered, that struck Edith to the heart. She could not speak; but struggling with her feelings, she rose to leave the place, when, as if smitten with a sense of his unkindness, Reginald caught her hand.

"Forgive me," he said, "I did not mean to pain

you—but there are times when I know not what I say—what I mean."

Edith could not speak, but she motioned to be gone. Reginald's agitation seemed little less than her own; but he still held her hand, and several times attempted to speak, but emotion choked his utterance. At last he said, "Edith, this state of things is not to be endured—I would fain speak to you—tell you of what I have suffered since—No, Edith, you must hear me—dishonoured as I am in your eyes—cold and estranged as you are become—'tis but justice you should hear me."

"I have nothing to hear," said Edith faintly.

"Yes—you have to hear me exculpate myself from the very suspicion of cold-blooded perfidy. My crime—if crime it was—was an involuntary one—so was the avowal of it. I would have died a thousand deaths rather than have wronged you, Edith. Would to heaven," he exclaimed wildly, "would I had died, rather than have lived to suffer as I do!"

"Why recur to what has passed—to what cannot be recalled?" said Edith with emotion.

"Because I would yet recall much of what has passed. Edith, I would yet ask you to forgive—to forget—" (He stopped, and paused in extreme agitation, then proceeded)—"to suffer me to expiate, by a life devoted to you, the—involuntary error into which I have fallen."

The pride of woman—the pride of Glenroy—for a moment mantled Edith's pale cheek with a deep glow

at this proposal, and she remained silent ; but it was plain her silence was not that of doubt or timidity, but of deeply-wounded feeling. Reginald's colour also rose. "If there is more that you would have me do, and that I *can* do, speak, and it shall be done."

"You might have spared me this, had you known me better," said Edith ; "such professions must be painful to you—to me they are degrading."

"Degrading !—if to forgive is degrading——"

"I do forgive, with my whole heart," said Edith, with emotion.

"And the proof ?" demanded Reginald bitterly.

"That I wish you all happiness," said Edith in a faltering accent ; and, unable to restrain her tears, she was again moving away.

"Stay, Edith," cried Reginald ; "we must not—we shall not part thus. 'Tis a mockery to talk of happiness to one so wretched as I. My happiness must ever be involved in yours—my suffering is, perhaps, still greater than yours. Edith, if you will yet confide in me, I again repeat—Heaven be my witness!—your happiness shall be the study of my future life. Say, then, that——"

"Hear me, Reginald, once for all," said Edith, in the calmness of deep-felt emotion. "That my happiness was once in your hands, I freely acknowledge ; but that time is past, *never* to return. There are feelings which never can be renewed. We never can be to each other what we have been. I never can—I never *will* be yours."

A strange mingled sensation shot through Reginald's veins at this declaration, delivered with a calm, solemn earnestness of manner, which admitted of no appeal. With an air of pride, he bent his head, and said—"Since such is your irrevocable determination, it is better we should part; for I will no longer play the hypocrite. I cannot continue to act the part of the favoured lover, after being thrice rejected."

"And my father!" exclaimed Edith, in anguish.—"Ah! Reginald, what will become of him if you forsake him?"

"I appeal to yourself, Edith, to your own good sense, to your right feeling, if, after what has passed, it is to be expected that I should continue to drag out existence here? By Heaven, I would rather work as a galley-slave!"

"But you are all and everything to him," said Edith mournfully.

"So at least I might have been—so I might be still; but you have decreed otherwise," said Reginald, with a sort of haughty humility. Edith felt the cruel taunt, but she made no reply, only turned away to hide the tears which rose to her eyes. Reginald's tone softened, and he sighed as he said—"Edith, 'tis best for both that we should part—at least for the present. Hearts once so dear—still so dear to each other—Edith, we are still too much, and yet not enough to each other—if the time should ever come —" He stopped, for he would fain have added, "when we may be more;" but his lips refused to

utter so false a supposition—"should the time ever come, Edith," he added, with confusion, "when your present sentiments may change—" Edith could not speak, but she waved her head to repel such a supposition—"At least you cannot prevent me from thinking it *possible* they may," said Reginald.

Edith's pale cheek glowed, while she said—"No, Reginald—rest assured *my* sentiments are unchangeable."

"And mine also," thought Reginald, as his heart throbbed at the bare idea that his love for Florinda could ever change—could ever be given to another, even though that other were Edith. He stood silent for a few minutes, then said hurriedly—"Then let us part; I am now on my way to Dunshiera. But, should Glenroy become worse, you have only to send for me, and I shall return to you instantly. God bless you, Edith!"

A tear was in his eye as he held her hand in his, and looked anxiously, fondly, upon her, as though he waited her parting word. Edith's breast heaved—her lips moved—but no sound passed them. She felt her fortitude giving way, but she made a strong effort, and said, with the calmness of agony—"May you be happy!"

He wrung her hand in silence; and thus they parted—under what different circumstances again to meet!

CHAPTER XV.

SOME time elapsed ere Edith could compose her spirits sufficiently to quit the spot, once the scene of so much youthful pleasure—now the silent witness of broken vows and departed joys. At length, though with sad and abstracted mind, she was slowly retracing her steps homewards, when her attention was roused by hearing the horrid accents of Mr. M'Dow calling loudly to some one to draw to a side—for *any sake* to draw to a side. Looking up, she perceived the cause of alarm was a wood-cart which obstructed the way, and arrested the progress of Mr. M'Dow's gig. Some trees lay felled by the side of the road, and increased the difficulty of advancing. The gig was evidently ill-driven and overloaded, containing his own bulky person, and those of two ladies of large dimensions—the hapless Amailye prefixed to the whole. Edith saw with dismay that escape was impossible, unless she had actually turned round and fled, which her native politeness would not permit her to do. The road was narrow, and whether from awkwardness on the part of Amailye or her master, the gig was in such a position, that for the cart to pass without upsetting it was impossible.

Mr. M'Dow was evidently in great agitation at the alarming predicament in which he had placed himself. "This driving is really a most ticklish business," said he, with a very red face, "and my beast has not been much used to it—and where there's ladies in the case, it's really—hem—I think my best plan is to get out, Mrs. M'Dow, and lead Amailye past the cart—just take the reins for a moment, my dear," to his lady—"just sit still; there will be no danger for you, once I'm out."

And thereupon Mr. M'Dow descended, and taking Amailye by the hair of the head, he dragged her past the cart; and with the sense of safety his courage and spirits rose to their usual pitch.

"Your most obedient, Miss Malcolm; I really did not recognise you just at first—this might have been a serious *rancounter*, for this is an awkward turn of road—but as it is, it has turned out very well—this is a most pleasant meeting. Allow me to introduce Mrs. M'Dow to you. Colina, my dear, this is Miss Malcolm of Glenroy, whom you've often heard me mention." Mutual bows were of course exchanged. "And this is Miss Violet Muckle, my wife's youngest sister; we are but just come off our marriage *tower*, which was a most delightful one! We were most fortunate in weather—scarcely a drop of rain the whole time. We spent some days in Edinburgh—it's really a most *shuperb* city! Mrs. M'Dow was much pleased with it; but I regretted that I hadn't thought of procuring letters to some of the principal literary characters

there. Mrs. M'Dow has rather a turn that way, and Miss Violet, we allege, is half a blue-stocking. The Edinburgh ladies, it is said, are all rather blue." Then, in a tone of vulgar sympathy, protruding his face as near to Edith as possible, he was beginning, "I was much amazed and concerned to hear——"

When shrinking back, she said, "Excuse me; I fear I am rather late;" and she attempted to pass on.

"Oh, I don't think it can be late; but Mrs. M'Dow's my regulator now—hoch, ho!"

Mrs. M'Dow here displayed a highly-ornamented watch and seals which hung at her side, and proclaimed the hour.

"Ay, we've come on very well considering—only considering though, Mrs. M'Dow; for I don't travel just so briskly now as I used to do in my bachelor days—now that I'm taigled with a wife—hoch, ho, ho!"

"You must always have your joke, Mr. M'Dow," said the lady, with a laugh, and a toss of the head.

Mr. M'Dow, having now taken a safe position, went on. "I was desirous of taking the earliest opportunity of waiting upon my excellent pawtron. I considered it a proper mark of respect both to him and myself, considering the many years we have lived upon such pleasant, friendly terms; and I was likewise anxious to make Mrs. M'Dow and you known to each other, Miss Malcolm, as I flatter myself it will be a mutual advantage. You must often find yourself lonesome enough at Glenroy; it's a great comfort for

a lady of taste and refinement to have a *shuittable* companion of her own sex at hand."

Edith tried to articulate something, but in vain ; she could only bow in silence.

Mr. M'Dow proceeded : "I was vastly happy to find my excellent friend Glenroy so well and hearty. I had a long chat with him ; and I was amazingly relieved to hear from him that there was no truth in certain evil reports that some ill-disposed wretches had been spreading on a very delicate subject. It's really most shameful," in a louder key ; "I only wish I could find out who it was—I would not spare them!"

Edith shuddered, and attempted to pass, but in vain.

"I sat a long time with Glenroy, honest man ; he seemed really happy to see me ! 'But,' says he, 'Mr. M'Dow, I wish you had come half-an-hour ago, when I had Reginald and Edith here, just waiting for you ; they've been kept waiting all this time for you to come and marry them.' And then, poor man, he gave me a good down-set for having stayed away. 'Why,' says I, 'I must plead guilty so far, that we extended our *tower* to a much greater length than we had thoughts of at first starting ; but you must wait till you've seen my apology, Glenroy ; I think you'll admit it's a fair one—hoch, ho, ho !'"

"You needn't put the blame upon me, Mr. M'Dow," said his lady.

"Well, I confess I had no great objections to play the truant for a while—it's an amazing relief for a

man to get away from the duties of a laborious calling, such as mine ; and I found a good deal to see in Edinburgh, though the ladies would not allow it was equal to Glasgow."

"Oh ! the streets and shops are very well," said Mrs. M'Dow ; "but I'm sure *their* Castle is not to be compared to *our* Green!"

"The worst of it is," said Miss Violet, with a sweet solemnity, "it is so much in the way in the Princes Street Gardens."

"And as for their Joint-Stock Dairy we heard so much about," cried Mrs. M'Dow vehemently, "I'm sure it's not to be spoken of in comparison of ours."

"Well, I admit they must draw in their horns there," said Mr. M'Dow, with one of his loudest laughs.

"You must always have your pun, minister," said Mrs. M'Dow, with a giggle of delight.

"I inquired for Sir Reginald," said Mr. M'Dow, again addressing Edith, who stood the image of despair ; "but when I heard you and he were both missing, I could not help saying, 'I wish they may not have gone to steal a march upon us, Glenroy ; it will be a pretty business if they've given us the slip, after all—hoch, hoch, ho !'"

"Pray, suffer me to pass," said Edith, sick at heart.

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. M'Dow, but without moving a joint of either himself or his Amailye. "I was afraid we should have had a shower ; but my wife is more weather-wise than me, it seems, for she and Miss Violet there *would* put on their best bonnets

to wait upon you. I told them that was really putting the best foot foremost, and that they ought to have kept them for the kirk on Sunday, but——Will you stand still, Amailye !”

The two bonnets were of salmon-coloured silk, with pink and green ribbons, and bunches of roses and sweet pea. The faces were large, flat, broad, red and white, assured-looking faces, such as are to be seen in scores on every market-day.

“It looks very like a change, minister—I wish we mayn’t have a shower,” said Mrs. M'Dow, looking up in alarm, as a passing cloud for a moment obscured the sun.

“Ay, that’s one word for me, and two for yourself, I suspect, my lady fair. Oh, *they* bonnets!—Stand still, Amailye!—I allege my wife thinks more of her new bonnet than she does of me;—is that true, Colina?” with a look of triumphant love beaming in his face.

“Oh, Mr. M'Dow, you’re really too bad!” replied the lady in a tone of reproachful tenderness.

“Bad as I am, you’ve taken me for better or worse—remember you that, my dear—hoch, hoch, ho!”

“I really don’t think I could have ventured to take you at all if I had seen you as daft as you are to-day, minister,” said the lady in a tone of mawkish affectation.

“If you think you’ve got a bad pennyworth, Colly, you’ll not easily get me off your hands, I can tell you,” cried the delighted Mr. M'Dow, “for *I’m* not

disposed to part with *my* bargain, I assure you ; but I flatter myself you and I will be able to put up together. What say you, Miss Violet ?”

A burst of laughter was Miss Violet’s reply.

“Don’t you believe her, Miss Malcolm, but take my advice, and follow our example as fast as you can. That was really a most scandalous report I was alluding to !”

Edith’s blood ran cold. “I entreat you will suffer me to pass, Mr. M'Dow,” she cried in a tone, and with a look that might have moved a stone, but which had no effect on the obtuse organs of Mr. M'Dow.

“We’ll get a shower, minister !” cried Mrs. M'Dow in a flurried manner, as she again cast an agitated look at the impending cloud.

“There it is ! there’s the bonnet again, Mrs. M'Dow ; but perhaps there’s a *little* thought of the gudeman too, for I can tell you my wife’s a famous nurse ; she’s been doctoring my throat for me, for I had a little of a hoarseness lately, and I alleged she was very anxious that I should make a great show-off in the pulpit on Sunday, being my first matrimonial discourse ; but we can’t agree about the text, I——”

“Oh, Mr. M'Dow, it’s really getting very black in the west !” and Mrs. M'Dow, getting desperate at the thoughts of her undone salmon-coloured silk bonnet, gave a jerk to the reins, and a chirrup to Amailye.

“Hoot toot, Mrs. M'Dow, this will never do ; what will my people say if they see that my wife has got

the whip-hand of me already—hoch, hoch, ho ! But I think," addressing Edith, "the Synod itself would be satisfied that I could not be in better hands, if it once knew Mrs. M'Dow." Here Amailye backed a little. "And if she should be the occasion of any backslidings, I think I may venture to say they have only to look in her face and they'll forgive them all." And with this flourish Mr. M'Dow resumed his seat in the gig, and with a "Hap, hap," to Amailye, was once more in motion ; but his voice was heard resounding through the woods, as he turned round his head, and called to the utmost extent of his lungs, "I hope, Miss Malcolm, you will soon have some work for the minister!"

CHAPTER XVI.

IT would be a vain attempt to depict the state of Glenroy's mind on the defection of his nephew. Not that he was at all aware of the nature or extent of the evil, for it would have been alike cruel and needless to have acquainted him with the truth. His mind was now incapable of receiving, or at least of retaining, aught but the ever-recurring images and ideas which seemed indigenous to the soil. As these followed not in regular succession, but came confusedly crowding together, pell mell, so did their kindred emotions of pride, sorrow, anger, impatience, and despondency, commingle in strange disorder, till his benighted mind, still groping for happiness, would at length lapse into fatuity or forgetfulness.

Dupe, not of to-morrow, but of to-day, he still lived in the momentary expectation of Reginald's return ; and as his notions of time were as indistinct as of everything else, he thus remained in comparatively happy ignorance that days, weeks, and months were, like the brook, flowing on, "for ever changing, unperceived the change." The present only was his calendar, and deeply sunk is that mind where only the present finds place !

It was Edith's province to sit hour after hour striving to beguile the old man's childish impatience, or soothe his querulous disappointments, for Edith was now all in all to him. Independent of the feeling of natural affection which, even unknown to himself, still lingered in his heart, her image was indissolubly united in his mind with that of Reginald, the heir of his glory; while she was near him, he seemed to think Reginald could not be far off, or else he viewed her as a sort of hostage that ensured his speedy return.

It was a heavy burden that Edith had to bear, and a mere selfish, worldly spirit could not have sustained it as she did. But a sacred and interesting duty lay before her, and to that she devoted herself.

In most cases the offices of filial obedience and affection may be considered as privileges, rather than as duties; for happy may they account themselves whom God permits to reflect back upon the hoary head 'tis their delight to cherish even a feeble portion of that love and gladness which, from the first dawn of life, had showered blessings on their own daily path!

But Edith could not be supposed to feel the full influence of filial love, for there was nothing in the character of her father to fill the deep places of the heart. Mere natural affection is indeed a powerful sentiment in every breast—but how is it heightened and refined when the virtues of the parent claim alike the love and reverence of the child! They only can tell who have most deeply venerated where they most

fondly loved ! Still she loved him as the author of her being ; and the infirmities of his mind and body seemed to endear him to her still more. As the proud, turbulent, overbearing Chief, he had been the object of her fear—as the helpless, infirm, imbecile old man, broken down by grief, and with a dreamy sense of disappointment corroding his latter days, he possessed stronger claims on her tenderness and sympathy than ever he could have had in his high and palmy state.

So passed the winter, uncheered by aught save many a kind visit from Mrs. Malcolm and her family. Glenroy's situation was a sufficient excuse for his daughter declining to receive company, even that of Mr. M'Dow, although he made many attempts to intrude upon her privacy.

She learnt accidentally that Sir Reginald still remained at Dunshiera in no less strict seclusion ; and, spite of herself, a vague and sickly hope would occasionally spring up in her heart, that a change might yet take place—that Reginald might yet awake from the delirium of passion, and return to the hallowed affection of his early days. But the hope had no root in itself, and often as it might spring up it soon withered away, for Edith's better judgment and loftier feeling refused to cherish the flattering chimera. And well for her peace that it was so. At the end of some months she received a letter from Reginald ; it was written in the language of complaint and reproach. He dwelt on the wretchedness he had endured on her

account ; he declared that life was insufferable to him —a burden more than he could bear ; that, bereft of her regard, and banished from Glenroy, nothing remained for him but a life of exile and sorrow ; that he was therefore on the point of bidding a long adieu to Scotland—that he knew not, he cared not, where he should go ; but wherever he went, he should ever fervently pray a better and happier lot might be hers ; and concluded by again protesting that the only alleviation to his misery would be the assurance of her happiness.

Edith was deeply affected by this letter. The thoughts of Reginald an exile from his father's halls, from his own fair domain, from the land of his birth, and she the cause—even the innocent cause—added new anguish to her feelings. The illusion of love was not yet wholly dispelled from her heart, else she would have viewed the matter in a different light. She would have seen that what appeared to her as sensibility was in reality mere worldly selfishness, coloured over with the sickly hue of a better feeling.

Reginald despised the society of the country. He was wretched in solitude, and he had none of that benevolence of feeling, or even manly patriotism, which would have prompted him to seek a refuge from his own misery in alleviating the distresses, or improving the condition, of his people and property. When he therefore bewailed the necessity he was under of leaving his native country, he was sincere in believing what he said, for he was unconscious that

in reality he was merely going to seek amusement elsewhere. A long and dreary interval succeeded his departure, during which Edith remained ignorant of the fate of the heartbroken exile, whom fancy often painted to her as sometimes sailing over the boundless ocean, seeking in another hemisphere to lose the keen remembrance of home, or wandering sad and solitary amid burning plains or pathless forests, reckless of life, or rather courting death. Alas! what broken reeds will not woman's love cling to, ere it can finally part with all its fond imaginations! Poor Edith had yet to learn another chapter of the deceitfulness and the inconsistency of the human heart! In little more than three months from the date of his mournful farewell, the newspapers announced, in the usual pompous style, the magnificent ceremonial of the marriage of Sir Reginald Malcolm, Baronet, to Florinda, Baroness Waldegrave!

CHAPTER XVII.

AND now Edith felt as though her destiny were sealed. Never more, did it seem, could her heart awaken to the love of aught that life could bestow. The idol her imagination had fashioned had fallen ; but even while it lay in shivers at her feet, still her fond, credulous heart had unconsciously hovered amid the broken fragments, in the vain hope that the image it had so adored might again rise, to receive the homage of a still enslaved soul. But now it had turned to very dust and ashes in her sight,—now the illusion was dispelled, and the selfish, hollow character of her lover appeared in its true colours. It was then a purer light dawned upon the darkness of her spirit. She now discerned that the image of the creature had held that place in her heart, and exercised that sway over her mind, which belonged only to the Creator. The enchantment of life was then indeed dissolved, but what heir of immortality would wish to remain the dupe of this world's enchantments ? Vain labour,

—“when souls of highest birth
Waste their impassion'd might on dreams of earth !”

“I never was happy,” says Adams, “till I knew I could not be happy in this world.”

To a mind so excited as hers had been it was not the daily routine of common duties and petty cares that could fill that aching void, that desolation of heart, which, of all human miseries, is perhaps the most insupportable. For, to borrow the eloquent language of Chalmers, "The love of the world cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. But may it not be supplanted by the love of that which is more worthy than itself? The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world by a simple act of resignation. But may not the heart be prevailed upon to admit into its preference another, who shall subordinate the world, and bring it down from its wonted ascendancy? If the throne which is placed there must have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he may not leave a bosom which would rather detain him than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure his willing admittance, and taking unto himself his great power to subdue the moral nature of man, and to reign over it? In a word, if the way to disengage the heart from the positive love of one great and ascendant object is to fasten it in positive love to another, then it is not by exposing the worthlessness of the former, but by addressing to the mental eye the worth and excellence of the latter, that all old things are to be done away, and all things are to become new."

The mind of Edith gradually became braced and invigorated by this new and wholesome principle, which imparted to her soul that vivifying warmth without which virtue is but a name. She felt her trials, but she no longer felt them as the cruel mockings or wayward caprices of chance or fortune ; for now she believed that all human trials, painful as they may be in their endurance, transient and perishable in their existence, are nevertheless designed by Divine wisdom to exercise a purifying and a permanent influence on the immortal soul, by bringing it to seek its happiness in Him, who alone is the fountain of happiness, and with whom it is destined for ever to dwell :—

“ Oh, sacred sorrow ! by whom hearts are tried,
Sent not to punish mortals, but to guide ;
If thou art mine (and who shall proudly dare
To tell his Maker he has had his share ?)
Still let me feel for what thy pangs are sent,
And be my guide, and not my punishment.”

With this prayer at her heart, and in the discharge of the daily duties of life, thus passed the even tenor of three long years, during which Glenroy lingered on in increasing dotage and infirmities, unconscious of evil, unsusceptible of pleasure—

“ All relish of realities expired,
All feeling of futurity benumb'd.”

And when at length the hour of his departure came, all that could be said of his death was, that he had merely ceased to breathe ; but oh, the deep

mystery of that simple transition ! oh, the dread import of that silence, which mortal lips never can disclose !

Edith felt as all must feel, more or less, at the breaking of so dear and sacred a tie. Friendship and love, dear and holy affections as they may be, are the affections we ourselves have formed and chosen ; we can look back upon the time when as yet they were not, and their existence was not linked with ours ; but from the first dawn of consciousness, it was a parent's love that beamed upon our hearts, and awakened all their best and holiest sympathies. Friends may meet as strangers ; the tenderest bands of love, even wedded love, may be broken ; but 'tis God Himself who has formed that one indissoluble bond, which neither human power nor human frailty ever can dissolve. But now this occupation was gone ; and oh the sadness of that morning light which dawns upon us only to proclaim that it is indeed gone !

The grief of Benbowie and Mrs. Macauley showed itself according to their different dispositions and modes of feeling. The former said nothing, uttered neither sigh nor lamentation ; he only paced the floor with a heavier step, and looked round with a duller and more stupefied gaze ; the latter, even in the midst of her affliction, sincere as that was, still contrived to find some consolation in the preparation for and in the anticipation of the magnificent ceremonial which should close her beloved Chief's mortal career. The

last solemn rites were now all that remained to be paid to the Chief of Glenroy ; and after vainly waiting in hopes of the arrival of Sir Reginald (who, with his lady, was abroad), Captain Malcolm, as nearest relative of the deceased, was obliged to take the lead upon the occasion.

The burying of the dead is a simple operation ; but custom has varied and amplified the accompanying rites to a great variety of forms and observances. The sacred and impressive service of the Church of England, in which the many sublime and affecting texts of Scripture that bear upon man's mortality are so forcibly brought before the mind, soothes the feelings, and elevates the soul of the mourner, when read over the remains of the righteous—one whose glorious immortality we feel assured is already begun ; and though we still feel that “in the midst of life we are in death,” we feel also the salutary and consoling truth expressed by the saddest but truest of poets—

“ This truth how certain, when this life is o'er,
Man dies to live, and lives to die no more.”

But to the thinking mind there are misgivings, and the whole seems little more than a solemn mockery when pronounced over the sad relics of worldly pride, unruly passion, and scornful unbelief. The extreme unction of the Catholics professes to bear along with it a saving efficacy ; but the Church of England service, if read over the remains of the wicked and the impenitent, can serve no purpose but

to harrow the feelings of the living, and rake up the ashes of the dead. In the plain Presbyterian form, as far as that goes, there is the power of adapting it to most cases and circumstances ; and although it never attains to the sublime and finished excellence of the Episcopal service, still, in the hands of a good and conscientious man, a solemn and a useful lesson may be learned from its simple and impressive truths.

But the service on the present occasion, as performed by Mr. M'Dow, more resembled a clumsy heathen apotheosis than a simple Christian rite ; though, to do him justice, he had laboured with all his might to show forth the merits of his respected patron, whose loss he, from various motives, sincerely and deeply regretted. A vast concourse assembled to pay the last honours to the mighty departed ; and the Chief of Glenroy was consigned to the narrow house with all but royal pomp.

And now Edith stood alone in the world, and a dreary prospect lay before her ; deprived of that resting-place for the affections which the tender relation of a parent more or less affords, she by the same stroke found herself suddenly reduced from a state of wealth and consequence, the state in which she had been born and reared, to one of actual poverty and dependence. Glenroy's estate was strictly entailed on the male heirs, and his personal property was found not equal to the amount of his debts. His marriage had been made without the formality of settlements ; and his natural indolence of mind in all

that related to matters of business, together with his habits of reckless profusion and ostentation, had ever prevented him from taking any steps towards securing a provision for his daughter. The worth or the affection of a parent is certainly not to be estimated by the amount of the wealth he may bequeath to his children, since, in the dear remembrance of a good life, a virtuous example, and an unsullied name, a parent may leave a more precious inheritance to his posterity than all the boast of wealth or pride of ancestry ; while another may gather up accumulated riches, which turn to dust and ashes even in his own sordid grasp, or may transmit them to future generations with a blighted name, a despised memory, and a character stamped with its own base ignoble features. But Glenroy did not belong to either of these classes ; he had led a life of mere worldly pride, vanity, ostentation, and prodigality ; he had sown the wind, leaving it to those who should come after him to “reap the whirlwind ;” he had had his good things in his own life, leaving it to his child to eat the bitter fruits of poverty, humiliation, and dependence.

In due time it was necessary that Edith should be apprised of her situation ; and although that was done with all possible delicacy and precaution by her kind friends the Malcolms, still there was no way in which the truth could be told so as to blunt its severity. The fact itself could not be disguised, however much friendship and tenderness might strive to soften it. She, the daughter of proud Glenroy, reared

amidst the rude magnificence of feudal state, and accustomed personally to habits of noble expenditure and costly refinement, to be all at once sunk to a condition of the most sordid penury and abject dependence !

It is not those who have been born and bred in affluence who can all at once comprehend the nature of absolute poverty ; those who have been accustomed to will their every gratification can ill conceive the privations of want, the shifts and expedients of fallen fortune, the difficulty which the mind has to contract its desires, and the habits of self-indulgence and luxury which have to be overcome or annihilated ; in short, nothing differs more than abstract and actual poverty.

Edith was, as may be supposed, profoundly ignorant of all those things in detail ; but the simple fact that she was destitute was sufficiently strange and appalling. In vain did Mrs. Malcolm, as she folded her to her heart, assure her she looked upon her as her own daughter, and besought her, in all the fervour of the fondest, warmest affection, to look upon Inch Orran as her future home. Edith assented to its affording her a temporary asylum ; but she could not bear to think of it as her permanent residence. The state of Glenroy's affairs had been communicated to Sir Reginald by letter. A reply was received, requesting that Edith would continue to consider Glenroy as her own, and make him her banker, until proper arrangements could be made to secure her future comfort and independence. But to remain

at Glenroy, or receive pecuniary aid from Reginald, were both out of the question; and she therefore prepared to bid a long, a last adieu to the home of her youth—to her father's house. Vain would be the attempt to depict the feelings with which that was done

“ Ye who have known what 'tis to dote upon
A few dear objects, will in sadness feel
Such partings break the heart !”

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE invitation to Inch Orran had been no less kindly and cordially extended to Mrs. Macauley, who, indeed, like Dominie Sampson, had declared her resolution of sticking by her patron's daughter to the last gasp. Mrs. Macauley felt this as she felt every affliction, in her own peculiar way. Prone as she was to indulge the visionary belief that she beheld coming events casting "their shadows before," she was no less given to reverse the figure; and no sooner did an evil befall than she was busy seeking for the blessing which she was certain was following close in its train. "Oh, what curious creatures we are!" exclaimed she to Benbowie, as the tears flowed down her cheeks; "to think of Glenroy's daughter being brought to such straits! Oh, if we could but see to the back of this great cloud that's upon her, not a bit but we would be surprised at the grand things that are provided for her, if not in this world, surely in that which is to come; but we are such poor blind ignorant creatures that we can only do as good Job did, put our hands upon our mouths and hold our tongues. Oh, surely if it had not been for some great purpose things

would never have been permitted to take this turn. Such a good man as Glenroy, and so proud of his own daughter, would never have got leave to forget to do what was right, if it had not been appointed for our good ; and after all we have great reason to be thankful. Oh ! I read such excellent words in a good book of Holy Living the t'other day, that 'deed I learnt them by heart, and I've often said them over to myself since ; but I never thought they were to be made suitable for Glenroy's dochter. Now hearken to me, Benbowie, and see if you can understand me. 'Is that beast better that hath two or three mountains to graze on than a little bee that feeds on dew or manna, and lives upon what falls every morning from the storehouses of heaven, clouds, and Providence ?' But one thing I'm sure of, Benbowie, that if I was you, like the great beast with his mountains to graze on, and saw Glenroy's dochter, like the little bee that has to be fed from the storehouses of Providence, not a bit but I would think myself highly favoured if I was permitted to make her a present of maybe ten thousand pounds or so—that I would !"

Benbowie's eyes grew rounder and rounder. "Ten thousand pound is a great deal of money, Mrs. Macauley—a very great deal of money. On my conscience, it's a great deal of money. I wish you good morning, Mrs. Macauley !" And Benbowie ordered his chaise, and departed.

Various were the communings which Mrs. Macauley held, as her mind revolved high matters of expediency

and propriety as to where her beloved charge should or could reside with the greatest comfort to herself and the dignity due to Glenroy's daughter. But with a true delicacy of mind, which would have shamed many in a far superior station, Mrs. Macauley abstained from all appearance of commiseration, nor even alluded in the slightest degree, in presence of Edith herself, to her change of fortune. A little tinge of additional respect was all the difference perceptible in her manner.

The only person on whom Edith possessed any near claim of relationship was a half sister of her mother's, but in all other respects an utter stranger to her, or known only by the contemptuous manner in which she had heard her occasionally mentioned by Glenroy as a cit, a cockney, and so on. At the same time, as she was rich and childless, he did not disdain to conciliate her favourable opinion by occasionally ordering a box of game, or some such demonstration of regard and affinity, to be sent, as might, he thought, entitle him or his family to a good legacy in return. But as yet Mrs. Ribley's testimonies of affection had consisted in sending, at three several times, to Edith a small Tunbridge ware work-box; a copy of "Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women;" and lastly, "Letters to a Young Lady, on a variety of Useful and Interesting Subjects, calculated to improve the Heart, to form the Manners, and enlighten the Understanding. By the Rev. John Bennet,"—inscribed, From her affectionate aunt, Katherine Ribley.

It was by the maternal side that Glenroy's lady and Mrs. Ribley had been related. The father of the former, a poor Highlander, had left a handsome widow and an only child to push their fortune as they best could. The child had been taken by her father's relations, and became afterwards the wife of Glenroy. The widow went as companion to an old lady in London, where she contrived to captivate a citizen of credit if not of renown. An only daughter was the offspring of this union : heiress of her father's wealth, at his death she bestowed it with her hand upon Mr. Peter Ribley, a sleeping partner in the old-established house of Rudge, Ribley, and Company. As there was no family to inherit the concentrated wealth of this pair, Glenroy had made it out as a clear case, in his own mind, that a portion of it would certainly descend to his children ; and indeed he seemed to think it would be a great honour for the old cockney's money to be permitted to flow into so noble a channel.

Edith had received a letter of condolence from Mrs. Ribley on her father's death ; it was such a letter as anybody or everybody might write,—a neat, clear, plain, commonplace letter, containing the ordinary expressions of regret usual on those occasions, where little or nothing of the kind is or can be felt ; concluding with an invitation to spend a year with Mr. Ribley and her, when they should be happy to assist her in arranging her plans for her future mode of life. Edith had answered this letter, declining the invitation for the present, but with a half promise of ac-

cepting it at some future time, when her health and spirits might be more equal to the exertion. But months elapsed, and she still remained the cherished inmate of Inch Orran, secluded from all but the society of those dear friends, the salutary intercourse of their pious pastor, and visits of kindness to the neighbouring poor. Many who had experienced her father's hospitalities had sought to repay them to his daughter, and she had received many kind and pressing invitations from some of those whom she had ever welcomed in the days of her prosperity. Some more sordid and selfish spirits, indeed, ceased to notice her whom they had formerly flattered and caressed when presiding over an almost princely establishment ; others of vulgar minds and inferior station seemed to think the mere lack of wealth had reduced the daughter of Glenroy to a level with themselves. Amongst the number was Mr. M'Dow, who, fired with the noble ambition of patronising the daughter of the lordly Chief to whom he owed his preferment, wrote to her as follows :—

“ MY DEAR MADAM—As I have not had the good fortune to find you at home on my late visits to Inch Orran, and it is rather inconvenient for me to ride so far for a morning call, I take what I conceive the preferable mode of communicating with you on a matter which Mrs. M'Dow and myself have much at heart. By the lamented death of my late excellent friend, your father, I am truly concerned to learn your cir-

cumstances are not altogether such as might have been reasonably expected from the high station which your father occupied, and which, consequently, you had always been accustomed to enjoy. I beg to assure you this change in your circumstances will not in any shape affect the high opinion I have all along entertained of you. No doubt the bereavement, sore as it was, of so valuable a life as that of your good father's, has been pretty considerably augmented by the distressing turn which affairs have taken, which have rendered this, I may say, a variegated calamity of no common complexion ; and since misfortunes will befall the best of us, it behoves us to make up our minds to them, for, as Solomon says, ‘There is time for all things.’ I therefore hope that your own excellent sense, and the company of some cheerful and *rationally* religious friends, may go far to bring about a great improvement in your health and spirits ; and I will be extremely gratified if it should be through my instrumentality that it is so. For that purpose Mrs. M'Dow and myself are of opinion that a change might prove highly beneficial to you, and it will give us both great pleasure to have your company at the manse for a few weeks. We are hopeful you will favour us by naming an early day, as we can promise you more amusement at present than it may be in our power to procure for you hereafter. Mrs. M'Dow's sister, Miss Violet Muckle, is upon a visit to us just now, as likewise my nephew, Mr. Andrew M'Fie (who is breeding a surgeon with his father) ; my friend, Mr.

Dugald M'Dow, is expected to join us in a few days ; so you will find us, I flatter myself, a pretty agreeable party. And as my wife and myself are of opinion there is nothing so enlivening as the stir of a young family, we are hopeful you will experience much refreshment from the mirth and vivacity of our young folks, who are nowise shy, but, on the contrary, amazingly taken with strangers, so we can promise you many a good game of romps with them, poor lambies ! Our eldest daughter, who has nearly attained her third year, is a fine sonsie lass, with a will of her own already. My second girl is an extremely forward, smart child (more of a Muckle than a M'Dow), fast treading on her sister's heels, and can already keep her own with her. My son (who is quite a young giant) has just begun to be weaned (in fact that has been the hindrance to his mother's waiting upon you, which she would otherwise have done), and has, I am happy to say, stood his trials in that way hitherto as well as we could possibly expect ; indeed his mother had begun him with his porridge three months ago, and it's amazing to see how he sups them ! We are hopeful you will find him a great resource once the first speaning brash is fairly over with him, poor man !—Mrs. M'Dow unites with me in kind regards. And I am, dear madam, faithfully yours,

“ DUNCAN M'DOW.

“ P.S.—In case you should not be able to secure the accommodation of the Inch Orran carriage, I will

have much pleasure in taking a ride over for you any day in my gig, as my wife and myself are anxious you should not incur any expense by your visit to us."

Even Mrs. Macauley reddened as she read this letter. "Did ever anybody hear the like of that?" cried she; "to think of Glenroy's daughter going dadden about the country in a gig with Mr. M'Dow! 'Deed he's no blate! I hope I'm not proud; for pride was not made for man, far less for woman, helpless creatures that we are! But 'deed I never would have dreamt of such a thing as that!—Her that's been used all her days to travel like any princess, to think of her going about in that *waff* way; as sure as death, I'm very ill pleased at Mr. M'Dow for taking such a liberty with Glenroy's daughter, now that she's not so rich as she should be! And to think that the skirlin' of his weans could be any comfort to her in her distress!"

There is no situation so humble in which demonstrations of regard and respect, or even affection, may not be rendered acceptable and even gratifying to those in the most exalted station; and when indicative of a right feeling, they cannot fail to be accepted in the same spirit, and duly appreciated by all whose esteem is worth conciliating. Probably Mr. M'Dow meant to act kindly; but his was the kindness of a coarse, vulgar, sordid mind, incapable of acting with delicacy under any circumstances; and of course his attentions could only wound and revolt the feelings

of those whom he intended to benefit. It is almost unnecessary to add that his invitation was declined, to his great surprise and mortification.

The next letter which Edith received was from her stepmother.

“MY DEAR EDITH—I have been extremely shocked by the intelligence that has just reached me of your poor dear father’s death. I assure you I was not in the least prepared for it, so you may easily imagine how sadly I was overcome. I am now, thank Heaven, more composed, and was able to take an airing, which has done me good. But Dr. Belloni is of opinion it will be some time before my nerves are restored to their natural tone. My spirits are, you may believe, much indisposed by this shocking event, and I am sure you will feel it also. It was particularly severe upon me at this time, as I had scarcely recovered from the shock of losing my darling Amoretta. Her illness was very lingering—but this is too sad a subject to pursue. It is, however, a great comfort to me now that I did go to Scotland to see your poor father, as I am sure it gratified him, though it certainly was too much for me, and I must always think that the severity of the climate was the cause of Amoretta’s decline. But that was a sad expedition altogether! You may remember also how near I was to losing dearest Florinda in crossing your frightful lake; and had it not been for Sir Reginald, I was assured she certainly would have been drowned.

The consequence was, you know, she thought herself obliged, poor love, to marry him in return ! I assure you I did all I could to prevent her from throwing herself away ; but she was so *entichée* with him that it was *peine perdue*. Between ourselves, I believe she now wishes she had taken my advice, for, to tell the truth (but this all *entre nous*), I think she is far from being so happy as she ought to be, although she is prodigiously admired wherever she goes. She was at a ball at the ambassador's lately, dressed à la *Reine Henriette*, and covered with diamonds ; never anything was seen so perfect. It made me almost cry, I do assure you, when I thought so charming a creature should have sacrificed herself from a mistaken sense of gratitude to a man so perfectly unworthy of her in every respect, as Prince Camarascha and le Duc de Chappinelle both said to me. It is very well known that he games, keeps race-horses, and does everything that is foolish and expensive. As to Florinda, her house, dress, and equipage are quite unrivalled, and her taste is perfect. She gives quite the tone in everything. I have got a very pretty house of my own, as there was no accommodation for me and my suite in Lady Waldegrave's palazzo. But I make a point of going wherever she goes, as, with a husband whom it is impossible she can love, and so excessively admired as she is, I think it absolutely necessary that she should still be under my protection. At the same time, I find it ruinous to my slender income to keep up with her. I am happy to say I

am in excellent health at present, and indeed it is likely to continue, as Dr. Belloni is a most skilful man, and understands my constitution perfectly. It had been sadly injured by the mistaken system of Dr. Price, who was a good creature, but certainly the most stupid, ignorant, and selfish man in the world. Belloni says it is quite a miracle that I am alive after such treatment. How very shocking to think of such a thing ! I think it would do you good to take a little trip to the Continent, my dear Edith ; it would amuse you. I should be very happy to introduce you into society. Do think of it. *À propos*, it is possible we may return to England by-and-by. Sir Reginald has taken it into his head that the climate does not agree with their little boy, which Dr. Belloni assures me is nonsense.

"This is a very long letter ; but I thought it would amuse you to hear all about those dear friends, who, I assure you, have not forgot you. Florinda sends her love and sincere condolence, and has long intended writing to you, but will certainly carry it into effect soon. Meantime she says she will be delighted to receive a letter from you.

"Believe me, dear Edith, ever affectionately yours,
"E. MALCOLM.

"Of course you have heard of Madame Latour's shameful behaviour, in having married a man twenty years younger than herself, after having got Florinda to settle £500 a year upon her for life!"

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. MALCOLM perceived with deep regret that it was not at Inch Orran Edith was likely to regain her cheerfulness and animation. The occupation of the heart and affections was gone. There was no lover now to watch her coming steps, no father to weary for the voice of his child. And yet the scenes of her past happiness lay spread out before her eyes as fair and smiling as in those bright and prosperous days. There, wherever she turned, stood the gray towers of Glenroy, but now silent and deserted, the appearance of desolation and neglect gradually stealing over its once cherished domain,—the only sound that now echoed from its shores, that of the axe ringing amongst its green woods and reverberating amid its mountain solitudes, as its leafy honours were brought low.

In her long and dreary attendance on her father's deathbed her spirits had been sustained by the influence of those divine truths which still breathed peace into her heart. But the natural elasticity of her mind had been depressed, and a character of stillness and seclusion was gradually stealing over it, which it would require a strong effort to counteract. The

closest ties of relationship had one by one been severed from her heart, and she now felt as if standing alone in the world. It is perhaps only the two extremes of human nature—the selfish or the spiritual-minded—to whom the solitude of even worldly affections is not the saddest of all desolations. Her tender friends were willing to make every sacrifice in their power for the recovery of one so dear to them; but it was difficult for them to arrange any plan which was likely to accomplish this purpose. It was in the midst of this perplexity that a second letter arrived from Mrs. Ribley, renewing her invitation to Edith. Thus a new vista was opened in the prospect; and even if it were not very alluring, it possessed at least the recommendation of novelty. The letter was as follows :—

“ MY DEAR NIECE—I had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 24th February, and it afforded Mr. Ribley and me much satisfaction to see that you were resigned to the will of Providence, which it is at all times our duty to be. The books which I would particularly recommend to your serious consideration at this time are those valuable works which, on former occasions, I had the pleasure of sending you, and from which, I trust, you have already derived much improvement; but they cannot be read *too* often! I allude to Fordyce’s ‘Sermons to Young Women,’ and Bennet’s ‘Letters to a Young Lady on a variety of useful and interesting subjects, calculated (beyond

any book I am acquainted with) to improve the heart, to form the manners, and enlighten the understanding.' You have certainly much cause for thankfulness in being so fortunate as to possess such worthy and respectable friends as Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm of Inch Orran. Mr. Ribley and I trust that the state of your health and spirits is now such as will enable you to make out your promised visit to us. And we hope you may find your stay with us both pleasant and advantageous. As the communication between England and Scotland is now very frequent, you will no doubt be able to hear of a modest and respectable opportunity, and you have only to favour me with a line when the time is fixed for setting out, and also one when you can calculate upon the precise time of your arriving here.

"Mr. Ribley unites with me in offering best respects to Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm; and acknowledgments for the kind attention they have paid you; and with good wishes, I remain, my dear niece, your affectionate aunt,

KATH. RIBLEY."

It was evident from this letter that Mrs. Ribley was at least fifty years behind the rest of the world in her ideas, and there certainly was nothing very alluring in the manner in which this invitation was couched. Yet it is well known there are persons of warm and generous feelings who are devoid of the power of expressing them, and who, conscious of their own inability, frequently fly to the very opposite

extreme of coldness and reserve,—even as there are others whose hollow hearts are for ever reverberating unmeaning civilities and empty professions, to which their whole life gives the lie. It was evident Mrs. Ribley did not belong to the latter and more odious class, and it was just possible she might be of the former. Mrs. Malcolm, whose judgments were always lenient and charitable, strove to encourage this idea. She saw it was of the utmost importance to Edith's future wellbeing that her mind should be roused to exertion, even though that exertion should be of a painful nature,—that her thoughts should be forced into another channel, even although that channel might abound in rough and stony places. In the circumstances in which Edith was placed, she had but a choice of evils—either to remain as a member of a family on whom her claims of relationship were slight, or to avail herself of the protection of those whom Providence had appointed as her natural guardians. The struggle of her mind was great; but a sense of duty prevailed, and she accepted the invitation, though with repugnance. Neither on the letter, nor on the deliberations that ensued, did Mrs. Macauley offer a single comment, contrary to her usual practice, which was that of being always ready to think aloud on every subject that was presented to her.

Mrs. Macauley had all that instinctive feeling which it is said belongs to her sex, even when most deficient in habits of reflection; and her instinct made her thus commune with herself:

"Deed, and I'm not fond of that letter at all ; it's but a hard, dry morsel ; 'but they that would eat the kernel must crack the nut.' It has been so ordained that Glenroy's daughter cannot pick and choose for herself, as she might once have done ; and so I would not be the one to put her from taking what He that's wiser than us all has been pleased to set before her. And though it's true we must leave fatherland and motherland, yet did not faithful Abraham do the very same thing before us, good luck to him and us both !"

* * * *

"Dear Macky, you do not tell me what you think of this proposal of my aunt's," said Edith to her, as, with a sigh, she took up her pen to answer Mrs. Ribley's letter in the affirmative.

"Oh 'deed, my dear, my thoughts are not just what they used to be ; they've had a great deal to vex them, you know,—not but what it's all for our good ; no doubt we'll be all the wiser and better for our affliction, if not in this world, at any rate in another."

"You say true, dear Macky ; but——," and a tear dropped from Edith's eyes on the paper—"but it grieves me to think I must part from you if I go to England."

"Part from me, my dear !" exclaimed Mrs. Macaulay, in astonishment ; "what could put that in your head ? Did not I tell you that nothing but death, or maybe marriage (if so be your husband did not like me), should ever part us in this world ?"

"Then I must not think of going amongst these near relations," said Edith, laying down her pen, "for I will not forsake you, my dear old friend ; and I fear I may not hope they—Ah, dear Macky, I fear, from this letter of my aunt's"—

"My darling, oh do not vex yourself at all about that, for I have my own little plans ready cut and dry, and I need not be a burden upon anybody that's not a drop's blood to me ; I have my own small means, such as they are, thanks to that good man, your papa; and I have a nephew of Mr. Macauley's that's a working jeweller and watchmaker, and a wise, well-doing respectable creature, and married to a decent woman, and they live in the City of London ; I have their direction in my drawer ; they've invited me, before now, to pay them a visit, and so, my dear, when you go to your friends, I'll go to mine ; and I'll never have my eye off you, for, 'deed, we cannot always be quite sure that our relations will be what they should be ; but what signifies that in comparison when I am at your hand (not that I would be so foolish and conceited as to think the help was in me), to see that nobody dares so much as meddle with your little finger without my knowing it ; not a bit but that's a comfort I would not part with to be made queen of all England !"

It was a comfort to Edith also to find she was not to be wholly severed from all she had ever known and loved ; and she fondly embraced the dear and faithful friend who, at the age of threescore years and ten,

was ready to follow her fallen fortunes with all the alacrity of youth. Nor was aught wanting on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm to testify the tenderness and sincerity of their affection. Inch Orran was to conduct his beloved charge himself to London, and consign her from his own hands into those of her natural guardians. Edith would have resisted this proof of attachment, but all her objections were overruled by her generous and disinterested friends; and Mrs. Macauley was comforted by thinking that though Glenroy's daughter was to travel in "a modest, respectable manner," it would also be in a genteel, ladylike style.

The hour of departure came, and with it poor Edith's *last* trial; for fairer and dearer than ever seemed each long-cherished object when about to tear herself from them. In the silence of anguish she parted from all; but even in sorrow, though cast down, she felt she was not forsaken; and Faith and Hope still gilded the path, joyless as it was, which duty led her to tread.

CHAPTER XX.

IT was the month of May when the travellers entered England—merry England,—with all its broad meadows and blooming orchards, each set in its own verdant frame ; its lordly towers, with their fair demesnes and far-spreading woods ; its baronial halls and ancient manors, with all their pride and privileges ; its antique churches, with their sweetly chiming bells ; its smiling villages, its peaceful hamlets ; and, more than all, its lowly cottages, their rustic casements brightly glancing through a “shower of shadowing roses,” and their garden plats, as if proud to display their gaudy neatness to each passer-by. All who have perceptions must be aware there is a difference between England and Scotland, and that all the powers of steam and locomotion have not yet brought them to assimilate. Wealth, the progressive wealth of bygone ages, with all its power and its experience, its confidence and its consistency, is there everywhere apparent ; while in Scotland the marks of iron-handed necessity are still visible, even through the beauteous covering which genius and romance have cast over her. And what though it be so ? and why should

Scotland blush to acknowledge a somewhat harder lot than that of its richer, fairer sister? What though its soil be more sterile, its skies more stormy? Are not these defects more than atoned for in the ever-varying beauties of its winding shores, its rocky streams, its lofty mountains, its romantic glens? And the eye accustomed to these will feel, even amid England's fairest scenes,—

“England, thy beauties are tame and domestic,
To one who has roam'd on the mountains afar.”

And Scotland, with all its wants, will ever be to its own children the “land of our love, our fathers' home.”

On approaching the metropolis the indications of wealth become still more striking.

To villas, embowered in woods and commons, with their patrician villages, succeed the suburban cities, which radiate from the mighty centre in all directions, with their streets, and squares, and crescents, and terraces,—

“A mighty maze, but not without a plan.”

It were vain to attempt depicting the sensations which fill the mind on first entering London. There is so much to astonish, to delight, and to disappoint, to bewilder and to excite, on a first survey, that all becomes “confusion worse confounded” in the attempt to investigate the nature of our feelings. It was a lovely evening when the little party entered the city, and began to thread the intricacies of its narrow streets, swarming as they ever are with coaches, omni-

buses, drays, waggons, vans, cars, cabriolets, and vehicles of unknown names, and of every and no description ; while, on either hand, the busy multitude flows ceaselessly along, meeting and mingling in one vast tide of human life. It is not always that novelty charms by its own power ; and to Edith and Mrs. Macauley the scene was more strange than pleasing. The simple dwellers in a remote and thinly-peopled country, where each individual, with all his little history of joys and sorrows, was known and sympathised with, they looked almost with affright on the busy crowd that everywhere surrounded them, and beheld with amazement the bustle, the activity, the energy, that everywhere pervaded this living mass ; while, in the midst of seeming anarchy, each and all moved in his own sphere, one of myriads, yet as much apart from all fellowship or cognisance of those around him as though he stood alone in the universe.

“Oh, will not that stupid man stop and ask what is the meaning of this great mob ?” cried Mrs. Macauley, as they entered on a still more dense and stirring scene. “Surely something extraordinary has happened ; maybe there’s a house on fire, or they’re trying to catch a thief, or somebody has been killed, or—but—but oh, not a bit ! if it is not the King himself !” as she caught a glimpse of one of the sheriffs’ gaudy equipages. “Oh, if we could but get a sight of his own royal person !”

Captain Malcolm smiled at her simplicity, and

strode to tranquillise and enlighten her mind a little as to the actual state of things. But poor Mrs. Macauley was too busy with her eyes to receive any information by her ears. For the present, therefore, "knowledge was at one entrance quite shut out," and she went on soliloquising.

"Oh, if that silly man would but stop till all this hubbleshow's past! Where can the people all come from, and where can they be going to? And to see what heartless, unfeeling creatures they are to one another! Not one of them shakes hands or stops, or so much as looks at his neighbour, as if he had ever seen him before, or as if he were anything more to him than the stones of the streets. And to see how we are jammed in and compassed on every side! And the shops, they are more than can be numbered, and yet I have not seen Johnnie Macauley's name amongst them all! Oh, this is a fearful place, and now that we're in, I wish we may ever be able to find our way out."

And so Mrs. Macauley went on, as the carriage slowly proceeded through the crowded mazes of the city, till at length it turned into a quiet but still narrower street, which conducted to their destination. This was a small dingy court, surrounded on three sides with dark red brick houses, the windows faced with white, and most of them decorated with pots of London-pride and wallflower. In the middle of the court was a bunch (for it had not the dignity of a clump) of poplars, enclosed in an elaborate iron railing. The fourth side displayed the back front of a

mean-looking church, its yellow gravelled path bordered with thrift or sea-pink. All looked gloomy and airless, yet all bore an appearance of the most scrupulous neatness and cleanliness, even in the midst of London smoke. The court itself was in the shade of evening ; but the upper windows were glittering in the rays of the setting sun, and Edith sighed as she thought how its glories were now resting on her own Highland hills !

“ And is this the place for Glenroy’s dochter ? ” exclaimed Mrs. Macauley, in blank amazement. “ ’Deed, then, it’s but a poor hole we’ve brought her to ; ” and poor Molly’s Highland pride swelled up to her very eyes.

“ You must not judge by appearances here,” said Captain Malcolm, with a smile. “ There is perhaps more wealth concentrated in this little spot than would buy Glenroy and Inch Orran ten times over.”

“ Well, well, but they cannot buy our good Hieland blood, that’s one mercy,” cried Mrs. Macauley. “ But they may be very daacent people for all that ; and, at any rate, pride was not made for man. So it is our duty to be satisfied, whatever befalls us ! ”

The carriage stopped at Mr. Ribley’s door, which was opened by a respectable-looking livery servant, who ushered the strangers into an old-fashioned hall, where Mr. Ribley was stationed to receive his guests. He was a little, round, good-humoured-looking man, with small features, florid complexion, light-blue eyes, a flaxen wig, and a shambling gait.

"How d'ye do—how d'ye do?—happy to see you—expected you sooner—long past dinner hour, but you shall have something," cried he, in a quick, shrill key; "so come along—follow me. Here, Kitty, my dear," leading the way to a parlour, "here are Mr. and Mrs. and Miss your niece, and all of them. Can give them a rump-steak—can't you, Kitty, my dear?"

Mrs. Ribley, to whom this was addressed, was seated in a small, dull, tidy, old-fashioned parlour, before a little work-table, with a large ominous-looking bag attached to it. She was, in outward appearance, a complete contrast to her husband. She was a tall, and rather stately-looking person, well made, well clothed, and very upright. She had a gray complexion, large Roman nose, eyes such as Wordsworth describes,—

"Two eyes, not dim, but of a healthy stare,
Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant and strange,
Proclaiming boldly that they never drew
A look or motion of intelligence."

Altogether she was of a grave and imposing aspect. She welcomed the party with formal politeness, and saluted Edith with what was meant for affectionate kindness, but lacked its genial warmth, which, however, Edith's own emotion, Mr. Ribley's flurried movements, and the usual bustle of arrival, rendered less observable.

"Kitty, my dear, sure Miss your niece, and her friends, must be hungry. Can't you let them have a rump-steak—London rump-steak?—a great delicacy to Scotch people!"

"Certainly, Mr. Ribley, if you think proper, and our friends do not object."

But here, with one voice, the offer was declined by the whole party.

"Not have a nice rump-steak!" exclaimed Mr. Ribley in astonishment; "why, it's quite a restorative after a journey. Perhaps you prefer tea and toast?—tea and toast very good," repeated he, as he ambled up and down the room. "Kitty, my dear, a'n't it our tea-time?"

"It will be in a quarter of an hour, Mr. Ribley," replied Mrs. Ribley, looking at her watch; "and in the meantime——"

"Ah! in the meantime," interrupted Mr. Ribley, "shan't we order a sandwich—nice ham sandwich? Westphalia ham in the house at this moment—beautiful ham!—bought it myself!—the flesh as red as a rose, fat as white as a lily!—quite a nosegay!—A'n't it, Kitty, my dear?"

"A very fine ham indeed, Mr. Ribley," responded Mrs. Ribley. But here another protest was entered against the sandwiches, and, as the carriage was still waiting to convey Captain Malcolm and Mrs. Macauley to their respective destinations, they declined waiting even for the tea and toast, but took leave, promising to return to dinner the following day. Poor Mrs. Macauley could not trust herself to speak to Edith, but, struggling to repress her feelings, after a long embrace the affectionate creature tore herself away, and Edith was left to the combined wretchedness of loneliness and constraint.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. and Mrs. Ribley were, in their own way, a very respectable, comfortable pair ; but it was comfort and respectability from which minds of a higher cast would have turned away. And indeed there was little to love or admire in either. Mr. Ribley was what he at first sight appeared to be—a mere gossiping, good-natured body, with a silly admiration of, and respect for, his own wife, and a constant habit of referring to her opinion on every and on no occasion. Mrs. Ribley's character was best described by negatives. She was neither a weak nor an unamiable woman ; she belonged not to the class of either lamenting women, nor advising women, nor bustling women, nor imprudent women. Neither was she an ordinary or an extraordinary woman ; but she was a phlegmatic, conscientious woman, without taste, feeling, or fancy, who did what she conceived her duty in all cases, and was quite satisfied that she had done so. No generous impulse ever led her beyond the strict line of duty ; no compunctions ever caused her to mourn that she had fallen short of it. She was a woman of dull proprieties and minute observances. She was at

least forty years behind the rest of the world in her ideas ; and a dunce of other times is perhaps still worse than a dunce of our own. They were religious, as far as mere outward observances went, which, indeed, with them as with many others, were mistaken for religion itself ; they were regular attenders of church, repeated the responses most audibly, were punctual observers of all feasts, fasts, and festivals, because they had been so trained, and, living under the Christian dispensation, their morals necessarily partook in some degree of its benign influence ; but to the sublimity and the beauty of its divine nature they were utter strangers, for they were mere religious animals on Sundays and church-days. In short, they were dull plodders through life, without any other purpose than that of fulfilling small duties, and contributing to their own selfish comforts.

Such was the pair with whom Edith was henceforth to be associated, and already her heart sickened at the dreary anticipations which imagination placed before her. For the first time the misery of dependence was felt by her in all its bitterness, and all the bright and lovely visions of her early days rose before her, as if to mock the joyless realities of her present condition. Oh, could her father have foreseen that such was to be the destiny of the last of his mighty line !—that she, the child of wealth and state, and high-born pride, was to sink into the humble dependant of the sordid and obscure relation, whom, in the days of prosperity, he scarcely deigned to acknowledge ! Such were Edith's

last mournful reflections ere she sank to sleep, the tears still wet on her eyelids.

"True as the dial to the sun," the following morning brought the faithful Mrs. Macaulay to the bedside of her beloved charge; and when Edith opened her eyes, the first object that presented itself was the round, happy face of her old friend beaming upon her with looks of love and gladness, as she sat by the bed, with a nosegay in her hand.

"Good morning to you, my darling," cried she, in her usual blithe tone. "You don't know how sweet you look in your sleep!—as sweet as this bunch of new-blown roses that I bought as I came along, and only smell how sweet they are! I'm sure you must have had good and pleasant dreams—have not you, my dear?"

"At least my dreams were less sad than my thoughts," said Edith, with a sigh, "for they were of past times!"

"Well, my dear, that's a good sign to dream of the past, and something to be thankful for; and this is a very neat, comfortable room, and Mr. Ribley looks a fine, hospitable, good-natured body; and 'deed I think Mrs. Ribley seems a very decent, perjink woman, and everything is really very creditable-like about them. And so you must do your best to be as well pleased as you can."

"I hope, dear Macky, you have reason to be pleased with your relations, and that you find yourself comfortable?" said Edith.

"And 'deed I have great reason to be thankful. Johnnie and his wife made me very welcome, and are very kind to me, and I have a very neat, little light bed-closet to myself, which holds a bed very well, and I'll soon get used to the noise of the street, and I do not mind the children above my head, though it really made my heart sore to hear that poor baby crying the whole night through on account of its teeth, poor lamb! When I heard it screeching like to end, I thought to myself how thankful I ought to be that never had the stound of a toothache that I remember of, for as old as I am."

"Dear Macky, when shall I learn to view the evils of life as you do?" cried Edith.

"My dear, it cannot be expected that you should be so easily pleased as me; for have not I a great deal more given to me than I deserve, and did not I owe a great deal, under Providence, to your good papa? And was not he the person to give Johnnie Macauley no less than twenty guineas in a present, to rigg him out when he came up a bare Hieland lad to London? 'Deed and Johnnie has not forgot it, and I'm sure never will."

"Papa was always generous," said Edith.

"He was that, and he meant to be very just too; but sometimes that is not so much some people's naature. I have promised Johnnie that perhaps some day you will let him get a sight of you, just for your good papa's sake."

"I shall be happy in this land of strangers to see

any one who will value me for papa's sake," said Edith mournfully.

"Oh, but Johnnie will be very proud of being introduced to Glenroy's dochter; but maybe you'll not think just so much of Johnnie as he will think of you. I thought he would have been taller; but he is thick and stout, which is better for the father of a family of seven childer, who has his bread to make. 'Deed I think he has been a lucky lad, considering; for, though his wife is not a beauty, she is a well-behaved, discreet woman, and he got well on to three thousand pound with her, forbye the good-will of the shop, and a thriving family; and though some of them have got his cast of the eye, what a mercy it is there's not one of them pockmarked like him! And now, my dear, that I have seen you, I'll just go back to my breakfast, for it is but a step between us; and Johnnie was so good as to walk with me himself, and he's just taking a turn till I come out to him; and maybe it will not be so discreet in me to come so often the first day, so I will not see you again till dinner-time; but keep up your heart, my dear, and see what a fine sunny morning there is."

"Ah, Macky, what are its beauties here!" exclaimed Edith, with a sigh, as she thought of all that the genial ray of morning was gilding at Glenroy.

"Oh, my dear, do not speak that way; but think what a good thing it is to be able to rise up and to see the sun shine, and to behold even that bit of bonny blue sky that we see here, and the very bits of

trees, though they are but stiff pookit things, yet they look as green and as cheerful as if they were growing in their own happy land ; and there, at a window over the way, is a gray lintie, singing as blithely as if it were among the sweet gold blossoms of a whinbush ; and if it can be so merry in its prison, poor senseless thing, ought not we, who have good understandings, and the Word given to us, to be contented and thankful for our mercies ? ” And with an affectionate embrace, Mrs. Macauley took leave of her beloved *protégée*, and toddled away.

CHAPTER XXII.

THERE was something in the hilarity of Mrs. Macaulay that always left a glow behind it, and Edith joined her relations at breakfast with less depression than she had hitherto felt ; but, alas ! it was only to experience a renewal of her disappointment, for the morning disclosed no charms in Mr. and Mrs. Ribley which had been overlooked the preceding evening. They were both exactly what they had appeared at first sight. The only difference was, that he was, if possible, still more fidgety and talkative, she more staid and serious.

"Come away, Miss—come away," cried he to Edith, as she entered ; "sure you must have slept well—so beautifully quiet here—might hear a pin fall in the court—might fancy yourself in the Highlands, if it was not for the watchman and the neighbouring clocks—no clocks and watchmen there ! And then by day you'll hear such beautiful bells—a beautiful chime has our church—ha'n't it, Kitty, my dear ? And then, when you've a mind to be gay, and see all that's going on, can be in Cheapside in four minutes and a half, and at the Bank, the India House, and Lloyd's

in no time. Charming situation is our square—must show Miss your niece all these things—shan't we, Kitty, my dear ? Now here comes the muffin—must take it while it's hot; sure you never tasted such a muffin—from the very first muffin-maker in the world —Mogg's muffins celebrated all over London. Now only think how lucky it is you came to us before we left town—couldn't have given you Mogg's muffins in the country—hot rolls there—hot rolls more rural than muffins—a'n't they, Kitty, my dear ? Only think, made three hundred thousand pounds by his muffins ; white as snow, soft as down, are Mogg's muffins ; a'n't they, Kitty, my dear ?"

"They are extremely delicate indeed, Mr. Ribley ; but with your leave, I would now propose we should arrange our plans for the day."

"Surely, surely, my dear ; Miss your niece and her friends dine with us, and Charles—fine young man, is my nephew, cousin to the great Sir Charles Penshurst, Bart., of Penshurst Hall, M.P.—has been at Oxford—is going abroad ; very fine gentleman is Charles Penshurst—a'n't he, Kitty, my dear ?"

"He is, indeed, Mr. Ribley, a fine young man at present."

"Kitty, my dear, what will you give our friends for dinner to-day ? Pray, Miss," to Edith, "did you ever taste Birch's turtle-soup ?"

Edith replied in the negative.

"Never tasted Birch's turtle-soup !" exclaimed he, in astonishment ; "why, Birch's turtle-soup goes all

over the universe—East and West Indies, China, America; Scotland is sadly out of the way, to be sure. Why, if you never tasted Birch's turtle-soup, you have tasted nothing. Kitty, my dear, let us have Birch's turtle-soup to-day—three quarts for a party of six, eh?"

"That is the proper quantity," said Mrs. Ribley; "and as you observe, Mr. Ribley, Scotland *is* sadly out of the way."

"Sure, my dear, we must show Miss your niece the Tower and the Regalia and the Lions; no lions in Scotland, eh? Lions won't eat porridge, eh? And we'll get Charles to go too; must have him introduced to Miss Mogg—old Mogg given up business—bought a fine house on our common—Myrtle Grove—can see from our parlour window everybody that goes in and out; beautiful creature is Miss Mogg—been educated at the first boarding-school in town—finished off at Paris—pays five hundred a year to the lady who lives with her, and is to bring her out; suppose you haven't brought much money from Scotland—not much comes from it—not much goes to it either; Kitty, my dear, you'll get everything that's proper for Miss your niece?"

Edith assured him she required nothing, which assurance seemed to please Mrs. Ribley, who said, "You are very kind, Mr. Ribley; and I shall certainly have pleasure in fulfilling your liberal intentions when necessary. Young people know little of the value of money, and are very liable to be imposed upon, unless

when they are guided by an experienced and judicious friend."

"Sure, my dear, you are always right, and now I'll walk as far as 'Change ; and, Kitty, my dear, shall I call at the fishmonger's and order him to send you a nice piece of Thames salmon ? Sad tricks played with fish ; I remember the day Mr. Alderman Winkle dined with us—bought a beautiful piece of Thames salmon myself—paid seven shillings a pound for it—six pounds and a quarter ; and what do you think—it was changed for Scotch salmon !—changed for Scotch salmon !" repeated he, in a still louder and shriller key. "Never was so ashamed in my life as when I saw Mr. Alderman Winkle helped to Scotch salmon —has been quite affronted—never asked me back ! And Mrs. Ribley didn't get a card to Mrs. Winkle's last party, and all because of the Scotch salmon."

And with this pathetic exclamation, Mr. Ribley set off for 'Change, having previously settled to return and escort his lady and Edith to the Tower.

Edith would fain have had her good old friend Mrs. Macauley included in the party, knowing how much her fresh and unsophisticated mind enjoyed every exhibition, whether of nature or art ; but it formed no part of Mrs. Ribley's system to do more than what she deemed her duty, in the strictest sense of the word ; and if she discerned Edith's wishes, it was only to make it apparent they could not be gratified. A handsome carriage was at the door at the hour appointed ; and, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs.

Ribley, Edith set forth, in the most literal meaning of the phrase, to see the Lions. Probably the same train of feelings and reflections fills the minds of such as are in the habit of feeling and reflecting at all, on approaching for the first time the Tower of London,—its grim walls and sullen moat, associated as they are with so much that is dark and tragic in the page of English history. But these have been too often felt and expressed to be repeated on the present occasion, and, had Edith ventured to utter them, would have been little understood by her vulgar-minded, matter-of-fact companions.

Mr. Ribley was in raptures at all he saw, though probably seen for the twentieth time ; and even turtle-soup and Thames salmon were for a time forgot in the nobler admiration of the lions and the crown. The judicious Mrs. Ribley, however, reminded him of the lapse of time by her watch, which, like herself, was always correct, and they returned home. At the dinner-hour Captain Malcolm and Mrs. Macauley arrived, and were received by Mrs. Ribley in a large, dull, stiff, respectable drawing-room, with its little serpentine sofas and formal circle of chairs ; its small elaborate mirrors, stuck half-way up the wall ; its high mantelpiece, decorated with branching girandoles and Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses ; its Brussels carpet, with festoons of roses ; its small bare satin-wood tables ; its tall twin fire-screens, embroidered forty years ago by Mrs. Ribley's own hands ; not a vestige of book or work, or any such lumber, was to be

seen in this room, appropriated solely to the purpose of sitting in bolt upright. Great impatience was now expressed for the arrival of Mr. Charles Penshurst, and the same rapid sketch of his history which had been given to Edith was now repeated to Captain Malcolm :—“A fine young man—been studying at Oxford—going abroad for a year—a very genteel man—cousin, as I said, to Sir Charles Penshurst, Bart. and M.P.—married my sister—spent all her money and broke her heart. Charles, my nephew, must make a rich marriage—will settle handsomely upon him if he does—wouldn’t go into the counting-house—must take either to the law or the church ;” and so on, till in a few minutes a cabriolet drove into the court, and in a second Mr. Penshurst was announced. Edith had certainly not thought much about Mr. Ribley’s nephew, but it is scarcely possible to hear a person talked about without attaching some ideas to their name, and thus identifying them in our own imagination. In Mr. Charles Penshurst, the nephew of Mr. Ribley and the intended lover of Miss Mogg, the muffin-maker’s daughter, she had expected to behold oddity and vulgarity combined in no common degree ; her surprise was therefore great at the entrance of an elegant-looking young man, with something even of aristocratic air and address ; but there was scarcely time for an introduction before the company were summoned to the dining-room, where stood a handsome silver tureen of Birch’s turtle-soup in solitary majesty.

"Now," exclaimed Mr. Ribley, "you shall taste nectar and ambrosia! Just half-a-guinea a quart! to think how cheap! Now, do taste it. Did you ever taste anything so delicious?" And he looked at Edith, as though he expected her to swoon with delight at the first spoonful, and seemed rather mortified at the calm manner in which she received her initiation in this ambrosial banquet. To do Mr. Ribley justice, he was as much of a benevolent as a selfish gourmand; for although he enjoyed good things himself, he had no less pleasure in exciting the admiration of others at the super-excellence of his repasts; he was likewise a gourmand of the true John Bull breed, and, with the single exception of Birch's turtle-soup, liked nothing that was not plain,—no matter how costly the material, provided it were of genuine English produce and manufacture. The same thorough English stamp of solid comfort and consistency pervaded the whole establishment; all denoted unostentatious wealth, that had gone down from father to son; there was nothing aimed at that was not accomplished, and if that was not in the first style of elegance or fashion, it seemed as if the deficiency were not from lack of means, but of ambition or pretension. All this proceeded from no superiority of thinking or acting in Mr. or Mrs. Ribley, but was merely the effect of the habits in which they had both been trained,—those of wealthy London citizens, whose household gods were all united in one, and that one—comfort. With all Mr. Ribley's absurdity there was so much good-

nature that even the most splenetic could scarcely have refrained from smiling at some of his sallies, which formed at least a relief to the dull monotony of the mistress of the house. Mr. Penshurst, indeed, was no inconsiderable acquisition to the party ; as if anxious to screen his uncle as much as possible from observation, he took the lead in conversation, and carried it on with so much good sense and pleasantry, and was so perfectly well-bred, and possessed of the tone of good society, that he already stood fair in Captain Malcolm's estimation, and had almost captivated even Mrs. Macauley. Under these appearances Captain Malcolm felt tolerably satisfied at the prospect of leaving Edith for a time in her present situation. The good nature of Mr. Ribley, the quiet correctness of his wife, the pleasing manners and amiable appearance of the nephew, the air of respectability and comfort diffused over the domestic arrangements,—all these, though each taken singly could do little to excite her mind or promote her happiness, yet, taken altogether, seemed to form as inoffensive a home as circumstances had led him to expect.

A few successive days passed on, during which the microcosm of London was gradually unfolded to Edith's wondering gaze. The august simplicity of St. Paul's, the hallowed perfections of Westminster Abbey ; these, the two great landmarks of the grand and the beautiful, with the various spectacles and exhibitions, each replete with novelty and interest,—the ceaseless flow of living multitudes and splendid equipages, so

different from the dull vacuity or vulgar bustle of other towns,—were a perpetual though unconscious stimulus to the attention of the novice, as they swept along in all the brilliancy and variety of wealth and fashion. In a short time Edith's good taste and right feeling would have led her to perceive the unsatisfactory nature of the empty pomp and senseless glitter that everywhere courted her eye. But who ever made such a discovery when for the first time seeing London? Yet the gay and the fashionable would have smiled in scorn at the objects that excited Edith's notice, and made even her City life, notwithstanding Mrs. Ribley's deliberate caution, appear a rapid whirl of novelty and variety. Mr. Penshurst was frequently of their parties, and by his general, if not very profound, knowledge of society, as well as of arts and literature, greatly added to the enjoyment by the information he contrived to impart. He also served to restrain the exuberance of Mr. Ribley's remarks, as it was evident his uncle regarded him with a degree of deference at least equal to that which he so lavishly bestowed upon his "Kitty, my dear;" and in public he formed a sort of barrier to the obstreperous vulgarity of Mr. Ribley. He was ever ready to screen Edith from his attentions, and to interpose his arm, when she would otherwise have been obliged to accept Mr. Ribley's. These were trifling services, to be sure; but "trifles make the sum of human things," and even the wisest must have sometimes felt their importance.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE morning as Mr. Ribley, according to custom, gabbled the newspapers aloud, under the head of Fashionable Intelligence of the Day, he read as follows : “Lady Waldegrave has issued cards for her first ball, which will take place at Waldegrave House on the 29th, on a scale of unprecedented magnificence. Upon this occasion the whole *suite* of noble apartments, which have been recently fitted up, will be thrown open.” And immediately followed : “We regret to state that Lady Elizabeth Malcolm’s musical party, which was to have taken place at her residence in Brook Street, has been postponed on account of her ladyship’s indisposition.”

Till now Edith had not been aware of the return of her relations to England, the notice of their arrival amongst a host of other “fashionables,” a few weeks before, having escaped Mr. Ribley’s observation. And when, soon after her own arrival in London, she had been interrogated by Mrs. Ribley as to the state of her father’s family, and the footing she was upon with his widow and heir, she had evaded the inquiries as much as she could by simply stating that, owing to

their absence on the Continent, she had had little or no intercourse with them. But now it seemed they were inhabitants of the same city—how near, yet how widely asunder! Geographical distance no longer separated them, but far stronger barriers were between. How closely allied by blood and connection, by the memory of childhood, and the love and affection and trust of former days; but how disunited by injuries never to be repaired—by hopes, thoughts, feelings—by all those qualities of mind and heart which form the character, and which never again could amalgamate together! There was something humiliating, too, circumstanced as she now was, in courting their notice. In the days of her prosperity, how had her heart been wrung and her affections trampled upon by them! And fallen, as she was, into poverty and obscurity and dependence, identified with the plebeian vulgar, to claim kindred with them now,—oh! there was humiliation in the thought. Yet, without explaining to her inquisitive relations more than she chose to reveal (for, with the prying curiosity of little minds, no half communication would have satisfied them), how was she to refuse her assent to the decision they had already formed for her, that it was her duty to wait upon Lady Elizabeth, and that without delay. Harassed and perplexed, she retired to her own apartment, to “commune with her own heart,” and ask if it indeed could “be still,” even when brought in contact with those who had so deeply injured her.

In the midst of her doubts and perplexity Mrs.

Macauley arrived, and Edith made known to her the cause of her disquiet. Mrs. Macauley was silent for a few minutes, and the tears swelled in her eyes ; at last she said, “ ‘Deed, and your feelings are quite natural, my darling, for this is but a poor hole for Glenroy’s daughter to be seen dwellin’ in ; but since it has pleased God to permit it for a time (for no fault of yours that we can see), I think we ought not to be ashamed to show ourselves.’ ”

“ You say true, dear Macky, but still—— ” Edith stopped and sighed.

“ No doubt they’re a bad pack, and deserve no favour at your hands, my darling ; but, for all that, you know we are commanded to forgive even our very enemies.”

“ I have forgiven long, long since.”

“ ‘Deed, I do not doubt it, for you was always a gentle, forgiving creature ; but, for all that, you know we never can be sure we have forgiven, unless we are ready and willing to be reconciled.’ ”

“ I *am* ready to be reconciled,” said Edith, “ but surely it is not my part to court the reconciliation ? Were they in my situation, and I in theirs, it would be otherwise.”

“ Oh, I’m sure if they were reduced to straits, any one of them, you would be the very first to go and help them, and be kind and loving to them. But it’s because they have more of this world’s pelf, that we think shame to let them see that we are not so grand and so rich as we once were ; and we think that’s our

humility, when maybe it's nothing but pride—ugly pride, as the childer's book calls it—working in our hearts."

Edith mused for a little while, then said, "You are right, dear Macky, it *is* pride that struggles in my heart, and would prevent me from doing what I feel it is my duty to do—to wait upon my father's widow. If I could have power to confer anything upon her, any mere worldly gift, I should not hesitate for a single instant; there would be no self-sacrifice there; but to go poor, dependent, and friendless—" tears burst from her eyes—then throwing her arms round her old friend's neck, "but not friendless," she cried, "while I have you to love and counsel me in the path of duty."

The result was, that she should that very day wait upon Lady Elizabeth, as the next was that fixed for the Ribleys leaving town for the summer.

Accordingly, at the early hour of two, Edith set out, accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Ribley, who, in case of her finding access, were to drop her there, and proceed to take their "ride" in the Park, while she paid her visit.

Upon sending up her card, she was admitted, and ushered into a small room, where a hot sun streamed through rose-coloured curtains, and a still hotter fire blazed, as if for the benefit of three lap-dogs, who lay rolled up on cushions before it. Two paroquets were scolding at one side; on the other, sunk in a *fauteuil*, and enveloped in shawls, sat her ladyship, with breakfast before her, and a bullfinch pecking sugar; while

chairs, tables, couches, cabinets, musical instruments, busts, screens, plants, flowers, and china, literally left scarcely room for the sole of the foot to tread its way through this labyrinth. Edith, however, succeeded in steering her course to the middle of the room, where she was assaulted by the three dogs.

“Don’t be afraid, my dear,” called her ladyship, in a weak, tremulous voice, as she laid her cheek to Edith’s ; “they are the sweetest loves!—they never do bite except in play. Amor, Biondina, Chéri, have done ! You remember my darlings, Amoretta and Bijou ?” putting her handkerchief to her eyes. “But it is too sad ; we won’t talk of such things. And dearest Amor is getting delicate !” with a deep sigh. “My darling Bully, don’t make yourself sick !—When did you come to town, my dear ? I assure you I am quite happy to see you ; and you look very well —very well indeed !”

This was said with a tone of chagrin, as she glanced from Edith’s lovely, serene countenance, and finely-moulded form, to her own haggard, peevish face, and shrivelled, made-up shape, which not even the aid of an elegant *déshabillé* could either adorn or disguise. In answer to Edith’s inquiries she replied, “Speak louder, my dear. I have got a little cold, and am so wrapped up I can’t hear anything.” The fact was, she was now very deaf, and somewhat blind—two disgraceful circumstances which she would fain have passed over. “Yes, I *have* got a cold, which would have prevented my singing to-night, so I thought it

best to put off my party. You are more *embonpoint* than you used to be ; you must beware of that. Are you fond of birds ? These paroquets were a present from Florinda. She is in town—have you not met her yet ? Were you not at Lady Ellington's ball last night ? I have got a little cold, and did not go. I am nursing myself, in hopes I shall be able for the Duchess of St. Leger's party to-morrow. Perhaps you go ? I would offer to call for you, but the fact is, Lady Moubray is to call for me in her carriage ; but another time I shall be quite happy to take you. And, by-the-bye, can I do anything for you ? My milliner, Madame La Roque, is perfect—rather expensive, to be sure ; but one must pay for pretty things, you know. I am sure Florinda will be delighted to do anything in the world for you, and will be happy to send you a card for her ball. Pray what is your address ?—for I really could not make it out upon your card ; something Court, is it not ?—Where *can* that be, my dear?"

Edith blushed as she replied that she was to leave town the following day ; then added, "I reside in the City with relations of my mother."

"Shocking ! In the City ! why, that's too dreadful ! How could you think of going to such a place ? We must endeavour to get you out of it as soon as we can," said her Ladyship gravely. "I must consider what is to be done for you. I forget whether poor dear Glenroy left much fortune—I'm afraid not ; that's a pity, but it can't be helped. *À propos*, I have got such a pretty set of coral for you ! I must desire my maid to

fetch them," and she rang the bell ; but before it was answered, she exclaimed, "Ah, by-the-bye, I forgot them in the hurry and the multitude of affairs, on leaving Naples. Never mind, I shall get something for you here ; we can do that any day. Now, before we part, my dear," continued she, "let me settle something for you. You are with very good sort of people, of course ; but, you know, to be of any service to you while you live in the City is out of the question. And to have any success in the world, you must leave it immediately. I am sure Florinda would tell you the same thing. As for Sir Reginald,"—here she shrugged her shoulders, then in a low tone whispered, "let me tell you, my dear, you had an escape from that man —most unfortunately for my poor dear Florinda ; in fact, it was quite a *mésalliance* for her. But she quite sacrificed herself to the romantic goodness of her heart. She thought it necessary to fall in love with him, because he had saved her from being drowned ; but, as I said to her, why, if your footman had saved you from drowning, would you have thought it necessary to marry *him* ? But, however, we shall not talk of that at present ; we must think of what can be done to save you. My house, as you see, is very small, and I require a great deal of accommodation ; but perhaps I might—yes, I rather think I could manage to have a room for you during the few weeks I shall remain in town ; and then——"

Here Edith, with thanks, begged leave to decline the honour intended, assuring her that she was satis-

fied to remain in her present situation ; that it was one she had voluntarily chosen for a time ; and therefore it would be using Mr. and Mrs. Ribley very ill were she to quit their house merely because their station in life was not sufficiently elevated.

“Why, you ought never to have gone to such a place. Certainly my permission ought to have been asked before you involved yourself in a manner which may put it quite out of my power to bring you forward. How can I possibly be of any service to you, after you have spent six weeks in such society ? How could I possibly introduce you with any effect ? Scotland and Scotch people, and Scotch books and scenery, and so forth, happen to be in fashion at present ; and I could present you perfectly well, as just arrived from Scotland. And as at present there is rather a want of anything very *distingué* amongst the *débutantes* of the season (Florinda unhappily being out of the field), with your face and figure—both, I must say, astonishingly improved—I have no doubt you would cause a sensation, and get very well married before the end of the season. But if you remain where you are, I can positively do nothing for you.”

Here Mr. Ribley’s carriage was announced, and Edith could only repeat what she had before said, as she hastened to take leave.

“Well, I shall try what can be done, and whether Florinda can send you a card for her ball. But where in the world will it find you ?”

“I should be sorry that Lady Waldegrave took so

unnecessary a trouble," replied Edith, "since I could not, even if I would, avail myself of it. I leave town to-morrow with Mr. and Mrs. Ribley."

Her Ladyship here began to remonstrate still more vehemently on the impropriety of her remaining where she was; but Edith was firm in her resolution to remain where she had voluntarily placed herself; and, indeed, the inducement held out by Lady Elizabeth was sufficient in itself to make her recoil from her proposal. Edith was too ignorant of the little, mean, crooked ways of the world to discern aught but mere weak, mistaken kindness in her stepmother's anxiety to have her thus brought forward. But the fact was, her Ladyship had her own ends to answer in this "fair seeming show." She had fallen very much into the "sear and yellow leaf" of fashionable notoriety; her parties were ill attended; she was not invited to those she wished most to be at; and when she went into public she found herself slighted and neglected. In short, her life was one constant scene of petty mortifications and insignificant attempts to regain her place in society—a place long since filled up by others, who, in their turn, would be pushed aside, when their little day was past. She had, however, enough of worldly craft to be aware that she might rise into consequence, if she could introduce anything to cause a sensation in the gay world. She had, indeed, a recent example before her eyes, in the wonderful success which had attended a declining dowager's introduction of a handsome niece; and the

first sight of Edith immediately suggested to her what great *éclat* she might attain by becoming the patroness of one young, beautiful, and a novelty—one whose birth would not disgrace her, and whose native grace and elegance would stand the scrutiny even of the ill-natured well-bred world.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE time had now come when Edith was to part from her kind friend Captain Malcolm—she knew not for how long. He was to set out for Inch Orran the same day that she was to leave London.

“Remember, Edith,” said he, as he parted from her—“remember that Inch Orran is still your home, and that we shall never cease to consider you as one of ourselves ; a daughter’s place is yours in our hearts, and at our board, while I live ; when I die, a daughter’s provision will be yours. Promise me, then, before we part, you will always, and in all circumstances, still be one of us !”

Edith’s heart was too full to speak ; but she pressed the hand of her excellent friend in hers, for she felt as if she were again losing a father’s protection, and was now in truth an orphan.

Edith felt this parting the more that she was also to be separated, though but for a short time, from her faithful Mrs. Macauley. With the help of her nephew Johnnie, she said, she had procured a very comfortable and respectable lodgings, within half-a-mile of Mr. Ribley’s villa ; but it was undergoing

some repairs, and would not be ready till the week following that in which her loved *protégée* was to leave town.

Mrs. Ribley, although aware of the faithful creature's attachment, made no offer of accommodating her with an apartment at the Grove ; for Mrs. Ribley was little given to consult feelings upon any occasion, and rather seemed to consider them as weaknesses, which ought not to be indulged. Edith had been accustomed to associate ideas of romantic seclusion with the very name of the country ; and soon weary and exhausted with wondering at the works of art, she had longed for the calm soothing influence of nature. But the nature of a gentlemanly English village, how different from the nature of a Highland chief's mountain solitudes !

Mr. Ribley's villa, the Grove (so called from a little patch of poplars and Portugal laurels at the back of the house), was in one of the many pretty villages with which the environs of London abound. It stood at the end and a little apart from a row of houses, in front of which was a broad gravel walk, garnished with a row of poplars, and dignified by the appellation of the Mall. Before this stretched a fine expanse of common, interspersed with other rows and crescents, as well as with detached and more rural dwellings ; some embowered in their own little grove or tiny park and pleasure-ground ; others with their simple paddock and little walled garden ; while a still humbler class boasted only of a flower-plat and a

single tree of stately growth, shading their thatched roof and latticed window.

Mrs. Ribley had frequently alluded to the plan of life that was to be pursued when they should be settled in the country, as something that was to be no less edifying than delightful. And though Edith's expectations were certainly not sanguine as to the pleasure she was to experience from being associated in any way with her aunt, still she was not prepared for anything so intolerable as the mode of life she found chalked out for her,—to sit in the parlour all the morning with this inane pair, Mrs. Ribley hemming frills for Mr. Ribley's shirts, while he gabbed nonsense, or by his lady's desire read aloud some edifying and instructive work of her own selection. To do poor Mr. Ribley justice, he would have resisted the task if he had ever been in the way of resisting any of Kitty my dear's commands ; but all that he had energy for was to try every shift to avoid it. Then to play over on an indifferent instrument Mrs. Ribley's old sonatas, and sing her antiquated airs, to pay and receive visits, take an airing—thus was the morning consumed ; while the evening was devoted to walking backwards and forwards on the Mall, chatting and gossiping with dull idlers like themselves. The only relief to this life of monotony was, that Mr. Penshurst generally drove out to dinner, and contrived to secure Edith's arm for the evening walk. Mr. and Mrs. Ribley expressed their surprise to each other at the frequency and length of their nephew's

visits ; but Mr. Ribley always settled the point by summing up his animadversions with, "Ah, Charles knows what he's about—looking after the elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg. Three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy!"

Nothing could be more methodical than Mrs. Ribley ; she had her days, her hours, her months, her minutes marked out, each and all for their own especial purpose, and these purposes the most dull and insignificant imaginable. "'Twere greatly wise," says Young, "to talk with our past hours, and ask them what report they bear to Heaven." But meagre and unsatisfactory would have been the register of Mrs. Ribley's doings, even on earth. Hers were the doings of a dull, worldly mind, operating in the narrow sphere of earthly duties, and affixing undue importance to the most trivial affairs of life. And perhaps, of all the varieties of character, there are few more insupportable as a companion than a dull serious trifler. Even Mr. Ribley's silly, vulgar loquacity was less irksome than the "leaden reiteration" of his lady.

It was Mr. Ribley's regular practice, every morning after breakfast, to take his station at the parlour window, to spy all that could be spied, and to communicate the knowledge so acquired to Kitty my dear, as she sat at her work ; not that he confined himself to that particular time for taking his observations, for he was one of those restless, fidgety bodies, who never can be still, and his head was to be seen poking out at

the window, or peering over the venetian blinds, all the hours of the day ; but that was a favourite hour with him, as the one in which the various tradespeople were, with true English punctuality, making the rounds of the village to supply their customers with provisions for the day. This was a high treat to Mr. Ribley, and thus was he wont to impart his information to his lady :

“Kitty, my dear, here’s the butcher’s boy with some lamb chops and a loin of very nice-looking veal, —is that right ?”

“Quite right, thank you, Mr. Ribley.”

“And a shoulder of mutton for the servants, eh ?”

“Perfectly, Mr. Ribley.”

“Kitty, my dear, I suspect the Moggs have taken possession of Myrtle Grove : I saw the butcher’s boy hand in just now a very fine-looking fillet of veal.”

“Indeed ! that does look as if they had arrived, Mr. Ribley.”

“And, Kitty, my dear, there’s a loin of pork, a calf’s head, and a rump steak, gone to Mrs. Martha Budgell. What *can* she be doing with three meats ? Single lady —bad health—only two servants; very rich, to be sure —and three meats. Very odd, a’n’t it, Kitty, my dear ?”

“ ’Tis, indeed, Mr. Ribley ; there must be sad waste, I fear, with the servants.”

“There’s a shin of beef and brisket of veal to the Blackets, and only a scrag of mutton for poor Miss Mudge ! Sad thing is a scrag of mutton, a’n’t it, Kitty, my dear.”

“ ‘Tis indeed sad to those who have known better,
Mr. Ribley !”

“ There’s such a noble sirloin going to our neighbour, Mr. Claridge—thirty pound weight, I’m sure ! Why, it does one’s heart good to see such a sirloin ! Sure they must be going to have a party !”

“ I think it very probable, Mr. Ribley.”

“ But here’s the poult erer. A pair of most beautiful plump ducklings for ourselves ; and now he has given in a green goose to Mr. Claridge ; and there—there, I declare, is a delicate little turkey poult to Mr. Mogg ! Sure there must be some mistake there ! white meat, white fowl ! brown meat, brown fowl ! Now, you may depend upon it, the poult erer has made a mistake ; the turkey must have been for Mr. Claridge, the green goose for Mr. Mogg : then all would be right ; there’s white meat, brown bird—brown meat, white bird ; but if they don’t find out the mistake, only conceive how awkward it will be ? Don’t you think so, Kitty, my dear ?”

“ Uncommonly so indeed, Mr. Ribley ; but perhaps something may depend upon the fish they are to have.”

“ That’s very true, Kitty, my dear, something *may* depend upon that. A very fine pullet and half-a-dozen plovers’ eggs for Mrs. Martha ; sure she must be picking up !”

“ Charming air has our Common, Mr. Ribley !”

“ I can’t think enough of the veal and the turkey poult having gone to them, and the beef and the

ducklings to the Claridges ! Sure we must find out whether there has been a mistake between the Moggs and the Claridges, and whether it was the fault of the butcher or the poult erer. Why, you know, Kitty, my dear, the very same might happen to ourselves!"

"It might indeed, Mr. Ribley. But perhaps you will now favour us with a little improving reading?"

"Good la ! come here, my dear,—only see ! Here's the fishmonger with a pair of mullets for us, stiff as poker s, I declare ! and sure if he a'n't taking a pair of soles to the Moggs ! And let us see what he has got for the Claridges—a beautiful eel for Mrs. Martha ; sure she must be quite well ! Now, now, let us see what—I declare if there a'n't a large piece of salmon and two lobsters for the Claridges !—Salmon and lobsters ! sirloin and green goose !—why, who ever heard of such a dinner ? Well, sure that *is* the very strangest thing—a'n't it, Kitty, my dear ?"

"'Tis indeed a bad arrangement, Mr. Ribley."

"And to think of the Moggs, with three hundred thousand pound, having white meat, white fish, white fowl ! I declare I shouldn't wonder if their soup was white too !"

"Indeed I shouldn't wonder, Mr. Ribley ; some people are so *very* odd !"

Much more of the same colloquy went on, till the forms of the butcher, fishmonger, poult erer's boys, faded into the distance, or vanished abruptly from the view.

CHAPTER XXV.

As the mind commonly finds its own level in society, it may be inferred that Mr. and Mrs. Ribley's circle of acquaintances was composed of commonplace, vulgar-minded persons, like themselves, full of the paltry gossip and petty detail of the narrow sphere in which they moved. Cards had been exchanged with Miss Mogg, but no introduction had yet taken place ; occasional glimpses, however, had been caught of her by Mr. Ribley, as she walked, accompanied by the lady who lived with her as her *chaperon*, or, as she was to be seen sometimes, driving out with "Old Mogg," in a very handsome carriage with richly-liveried attendants.

Amongst the little coterie of the Mall and its neighbourhood there was a constant interchange of tea-drinkings, or, still worse, what they called evening parties, including cards, cake, music, lemonade, and *ennui*. It was at one of these that the "elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg" made her first appearance, and Edith was again surprised to behold, in the person of the muffin-maker's daughter, a very pretty, fashionable-looking girl, who talked, laughed, played,

and sang, in a very well-taught manner. In short, Miss Mogg was like thousands of other pretty girls who have been educated at fashionable boarding-schools, and acquired that external polish which is now the great aim and end of education to impart. Edith had not mixed much in general society, but she had been all her life accustomed to do the honours of her father's house to many a noble and distinguished guest, and to receive, in return, those marked and peculiar attentions due to the fair and youthful mistress of a noble establishment. But now, amidst this plebeian coterie, she found herself a person of no consequence whatever, compared to Miss Mogg, the muffin-maker's daughter—so relative a thing is personal importance! She was slightly and civilly, sometimes compassionately, spoken to, evidently as the poor dependent niece who lived with good Mrs. Ribley; but all was wonder and admiration and exclamation at the beauty, the dress, the accomplishments of the charming Miss Mogg. Edith felt the difference, but she had so little personal pride or vanity that she felt it without pain—except as it forced upon her the retrospect of changed days and fallen fortunes. Mr. Penshurst, who unexpectedly joined the party, was the only one who did not enter the charmed circle which surrounded Miss Mogg as she sat at the piano, but took his station by Edith, who sat a little apart. This *faux pas* at the very outset would not have been passed over in silence by Mr. Ribley, had not he and his lady been both at

cards in the back drawing-room, and ignorant of what was going on, while Edith, viewing him as the intended lover of Miss Mogg, gave him credit for the delicacy which kept him from jostling and elbowing with the crowd of her admirers.

"How you must despise us mercenary English," said he to Edith, as he stood by her chair, and looked with something like scorn on the rest of the company, "when you see the homage we render to mere wealth."

"Is it not the universal idol, under some form or other?" replied she.

"Yes, with the vulgar; even mere vulgar coin commands reverence; but you, I am sure, would be no worshipper of wealth under any form."

"Every country—nay, every heart, has perhaps its own false deity," said Edith.

"It may be so, but surely there are none so vulgarising as the love of money. When I think of the mass of wealth which even this room contains, it almost sickens me at the thought of riches. Here it displays none of those charms which render it so fascinating in refined society; and, I confess, the idol appears to me in all its native deformity."

"I should imagine it was seldom seen to greater advantage than in the person of Miss Mogg," said Edith; "she is very pretty."

"Yes, she would look very well even at Almack's. She sings well, and, I have no doubt, waltzes well," replied he carelessly. "I see you are incredulous about the sincerity of my homage at a nobler shrine;

but you are right, Miss Mogg is a very *nice* girl, to use the favourite expression of the *caste* to which I *partly* belong ; not that I mean to affect any aristocratic airs," he added, smiling, "or to deprecate the excellence of a body of people so respectable as that of the commercial class of England ; in it there are many members who would do honour to the highest rank or station, just as there are patricians by birth who would disgrace the most plebeian extraction ; I only regret that you should have been made acquainted with so unfavourable a specimen of English taste and manners."

"I flatter myself," said Edith, "I am more in the way of losing prejudices than of acquiring them. I have already got rid of a few since I came to England."

"So have I, since you came to England. Come, let us compare notes. In Mrs. Ribley's niece, I expected to behold—no, I really cannot bring myself to describe what I expected to find you—except that it was in everything the reverse of what you are."

"That may or may not be a compliment," said Edith ; "but since you have set me such an example of candour, I can do no less than follow it, as I am sure Mr. Ribley's unseen nephew might have rivalled Mrs. Ribley's niece."

Mr. Penshurst laughed while he said, "It is well the phantoms have destroyed each other ; let us hope they never again may revive even in imagination." Then, as the card parties in which Mr. and Mrs. Ribley had been engaged broke up, and they were

entering the room, he exclaimed, "But I must be presented to Miss Mogg, if I would prevent my good uncle from exposing himself and me." He then hastened towards the spot where she was, in time to save appearances, and poor Mr. Ribley could scarcely restrain his transports when he beheld his nephew actually engaged in conversation with "the elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg."

The entertainment was drawing to a close; the company took leave; and as the distance was short, and the evening fine, Mrs. Ribley walked home in her clogs and calash, leaning on Mr. Ribley, while Edith was as usual consigned to the care of Charles Penshurst. As they walked along, Mr. Ribley kept repeating, "Sweet pretty creature is Miss Mogg, and so affable! All the gentlemen are in love with her—a'n't they, Kitty, my dear? Hope she noticed you peticklarly, Charles? And you may depend upon it, old Mogg's in a dropsy, and she'll have three hundred thousand pound! Three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy!!!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

EDITH had felt the want of her kind, merry-hearted Mrs. Macauley, and had many times walked to the cottage where her lodgings were taken for her, to watch, and, if possible, hasten the progress of the little alterations that were taking place, and which had been protracted from one week to nearly three. These were now completed, and she came, blithe as a bee, to take possession of her apartments. The cottage belonged to a respectable, elderly pair, well skilled in all those little domestic comforts which make an English cottage a perfect epitome of simple enjoyment. It was an irregular, old-fashioned building, with pointed gables and latticed windows, shrouded amongst honeysuckles and jasmine, and surrounded on three sides with a garden at least coeval with itself, which opened upon a wild secluded corner of the common, sprinkled with aged thorns, and gay with furze. From this diverged many a green and bosky lane,

“Bower'd with wild roses and the clasping woodbine.”

It was a happy meeting between Edith and her

old friend ; for although no companion for the cultivated mind and refined taste of her *élève*, still, in the simple overflowings of her love, and the hilarity of her temper, Edith found a charm which she would vainly have sought for even in the most polished intercourse of society. If, as Adam Smith says, "the greatest pleasure in life consists in being beloved," that pleasure assuredly was Edith's, and her own heart seemed to revive and expand beneath the brightening influence of another's joy.

"Oh, my darling !" cried she, as the tears of delight rolled down her somewhat faded cheeks, " how happy I am to see you again !—not but what I've seen you every night in my dreams since we parted ; and was not that a great comfort to me, think you, and one I ought to be very grateful for ? 'Deed I think so, for it is not everybody that has so great a gift, if I may say so, vouchsafed to them. Oh, what would have become of me in the heart of that great dungeon, if I had never been blessed with a sight of your sweet face !"

" Dear Macky !" said Edith, as she returned the fond embrace, " I trust you have been well, and tolerably happy even in the heart of your dungeon, as you call London ?"

" 'Deed, I ought to be very happy, for surely I am a surprising creature, to be so stout at my great age, and to have the sense granted me, too, to be sensible of the favour that has been shown me ; for some have the strength without the sense, and some have the sense, but are weak in the body ; but though your

good papa was not pleased to think I had sense, yet I always thought I had my share, and that I would have to give an account of that, as well as of my great health, some day."

" You have been very busy, then, doing good, as usual? Come, tell me what you have been about, dear Macky, since I left you."

" Oh, 'deed, my doings have been but small, for they were all with Johnnie's people, poor things! Two of them, Duncan and Nancy, took the nettle-rush, poor lambs, and that made them very crabbit and ill to manage, especially as their mother, poor body, is rather—is just maybe too good to them in the way of humouring them,—which, to be sure, is very naatral, considering what poor, pinging-like things they are; and Archie, he was sent home from the boarding-school with the mumps, and his hand was never out of mischief; but is it not very naatral, considering how strict they keep poor childer at they schools, that they should go like teegers when they get out of them? Then the baby had a sad towt with its teeth; and the lass that takes care of the bairns, she burnt her hand, and was not able to part them when they fought wi' one another. I really thought Archie and Duncan would have ruggit the very heads off one another, poor things; so it was a great mercy I chanced to be in the family at the time when I was able to help them in their straits; and now they're all set to rights again;—Archie away back to the school, and the baby has cut two great

teeth, and the lass's hand is healed, and they're all to come down and take their dinner wi' me next Saturday, and that will be a fine ploy, and they will be so pleased to see how comfortable I am. This is really a bit bonny spot and a neat house, and discreet, purpose-like bodies that keep it ; and so, my love, we ought to be thankful, even though we are in England, for we might have been in a worse place."

Edith would gladly have exchanged the senseless, soulless life and luxurious board of the Ribleys for the heartfelt pleasures and simple fare she would have enjoyed with her old friend, but that might not be ; she resolved, however, to appropriate her morning hours to her, as also such other portions of the day as she could abstract from the claims of Mrs. Ribley. Frequent though formal invitations were also given to Mrs. Macauley to dine or drink tea at the Grove ; and thus several weeks passed away without any greater varieties than occasional parties, when Miss Mogg always shone forth as the star of the evening.

Edith had all her life been accustomed to mix freely in gentlemen's society, and to receive a great deal of attention, without attaching to it any of those ideas of love and marriage, or even exclusive admiration, which young ladies are so apt to indulge, when they find themselves at all distinguished beyond the common forms of well-bred indifference. She therefore conversed with gentlemen with the same absence of design, and consequent ease of deportment, as she would have done with companions of her own sex ;

and there was a simple quiet refinement in her manner, equally remote from prudery as from coquetry. Something of this might also have been owing to her affections having been so exclusively engrossed by one object. These affections had been deeply wounded ; and though the wound itself had long since closed, it had been succeeded by an insensibility which rendered her alike unconscious of, and indifferent to, ordinary impressions. Not even Mrs. Ribley, with all her cold correctness, could find fault with the manners of her niece ; not that she admired them ; they lacked that formality which with her was the criterion of virtue, and made it difficult for her to comprehend how far there could be purity of heart, and sincerity of mind, and dignity of behaviour, without this her guardian angel to protect the whole. Although she could not say that Edith encouraged the attentions of Charles Penshurst, she began to suspect that Charles Penshurst was rather too particular and unremitting in his attentions to Edith.

At length an *éclaircissement* took place. One day, as the ladies sat in solemn silence at their work, Mr. Ribley came twaddling into the room, his wig all awry, his eyes goggling, his hands shaking, and his whole person indicative of great mental agitation. He looked for a minute or two, as if doubting the evidence of his own senses ; then, with a sort of scream, burst forth, “Refused Miss Mogg ! refused Miss Mogg ! three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy !” And he wrung his hands, and

ambled up and down the room, repeating the same thing at least a dozen times to himself.

"Pray be composed, Mr. Ribley," said his lady, as she calmly threaded her needle, and even made a knot at the end of her thread ; "be composed, pray, Mr. Ribley."

"Why, Kitty, my dear, you don't know—why now what do you think ? After all, such a fine education—been at Oxford—and—and would have settled fifty thousand pound upon him at once—to refuse Miss Mogg !" Here his voice rose again to a treble shriek, "To refuse Miss Mogg ! three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg, as sure as I'm alive, in a dropsy ! Seen him myself—legs as thick as three of mine ; a'n't they, Kitty, my dear ?"

"Indeed ! the poor old gentleman !—But I have not seen Mr. Mogg of a great while, Mr. Ribley."

"Well, all over now," said he, in a calmer tone, and standing still ; "refuses to pay his addresses to Miss Mogg ! refuses Miss Mogg ! and after I had sounded old Mogg myself——"

Here Edith had risen to quit the room, that Mrs. Ribley might be more at liberty to receive the full disclosure she saw about to take place. But Mrs. Ribley, with compressed lips, glassy eyes, and an emphatic wave of the head, said, "You will oblige me by remaining where you are, Edith, till we have finished these frills. It is of importance that the frills that are to be worn together should be hemmed together."

"Sounded old Mogg myself!—found him quite agreeable—told him what a fine young man my nephew is—cousin to Sir Charles Penshurst—only one between him and the title—settle fifty thousand pound upon him myself; and after all, to refuse to pay his addresses to Miss Mogg! the elegant and accomplished Miss Mogg! three hundred thousand pound, and old Mogg in a dropsy!"

"'Tis indeed very extraordinary, Mr. Ribley, that Charles should be so disobedient, when it's all for his own advantage too." And she cast a look of cold scrutiny at Edith, who sat quite unconscious either of it or of the suspicions which were now beginning to be bodied forth in Mrs. Ribley's dull brain. "Can you assign no probable motive, Miss Malcolm," said she, "for this extraordinary behaviour of Mr. Penshurst?"

Edith looked with such innocent surprise as might almost have sufficed to answer the question. "None," replied she, "except that he does not particularly admire Miss Mogg, I suppose."

"Not admire Miss Mogg!" exclaimed Mr. Ribley; "not admire three hundred thousand pound! Sure he can't be such a fool, eh, Kitty, my dear?"

"I should be still more surprised if he is capable of disobeying such an uncle as you have been to him, Mr. Ribley." Then turning to Edith, "If you know who Mr. Penshurst does not admire, can you tell us whom he does admire?" And Mrs. Ribley fixed her large solemn eyes full upon her face, as she put the interrogation.

The truth for the first time flashed upon Edith's mind. She saw she was suspected, and with the rapidity of lightning various little circumstances, which at the time she had passed carelessly by, now darted into her mind, as if to bring conviction home to her. With a deepened colour she said, "I have never been honoured with Mr. Penshurst's confidence. I beg I may therefore be spared any further discussion on a subject in which I never can be interested, otherwise than as the friend of the parties."

Then calmly laying aside her work, she rose and left the room, Mr. Ribley's pathetic exclamations resounding in her ear as she closed the door.

Desirous of avoiding being again called to a discussion which delicacy forbade that she should ever have been made acquainted with, she resolved to go and pass the day with Mrs. Macauley, and thus be out of the way of this unpleasant family altercation. Leaving a message, therefore, with the servant, to say where she had gone, she set out on her walk alone, contrary to Mrs. Ribley's disapproval of young ladies walking by themselves. She had gone but a little way from the house, when she found herself overtaken and joined by the very person she most wished to avoid—Mr. Penshurst. He offered her his arm as usual, which for the first time she hesitated to accept; and with some embarrassment added, that, as she was going to spend the day with her friend, she begged she might not interfere with his arrangements.

"Is there no other reason for your declining my attendance?" he inquired, looking earnestly at her.

Edith was silent; for truth forbade her to say there was not, and to acknowledge there was would have been to lead to an explanation she wished to avoid.

But her companion seemed to penetrate her motive, for he said, "I see how it is; you are aware of what has passed between my good uncle and me, and you are afraid to give countenance to the rebellious nephew."

"I certainly wish to avoid doing anything that might be construed into disrespect of Mr. and Mrs. Ribley," replied Edith.

"But I flatter myself you do not carry your respect for their prejudices beyond your wishes for my happiness?"

"I would hope that both might be combined," replied Edith.

"Impossible in the present case; and if I believed you sincere, or at least that you were aware of the nature of the hope you have just expressed, suffer me to say, it would give me incalculable pain."

"The wish *was* sincere," said Edith gently; "the pain was unintentional."

"You wish then," said Mr. Penshurst warmly, "that I should sacrifice myself for gold; that I should join the mean herd who are paying court to the muffin-maker's daughter; that I should suffer my well-meaning, but misjudging uncle, to set about

negotiating for my future happiness, just as he would for a transfer of his bank-stock. Is this what you wish? No. I am sure it cannot be."

"I have certainly no wish to give even an opinion in a matter which, pardon me for saying, ought to be confined entirely to the parties themselves, Mr. Penshurst."

"Pardon me! I acknowledge I have taken a liberty in intruding myself and my concerns on your attention; but I had flattered myself that neither were so entirely insignificant as to be wholly beneath your notice."

"My notice can be of no value," said Edith, "for it can render you no service. I possess no influence whatever with either Mr. or Mrs. Ribley."

"And if you did," interrupted he, "I trust it would not be used in such a cause; for it is too absurd a one to require serious interference; and I certainly never should have even alluded to it, had I not already experienced the bad effects of my uncle's imprudence in the distance of your manner towards me."

He paused, and Edith made no reply, for in truth she knew not what to say. Mr. Penshurst resumed: "Your silence is a tacit acknowledgment that it is so, and I can easily conjecture what has occasioned the change; but, however I may admire and respect the delicacy which prompts it, I cannot but deplore that anything should have occurred to interrupt the happy intercourse I have hitherto enjoyed with you."

"When you are reconciled to your uncle," said Edith gently, "the interruption will cease, and everything will return to its former friendly footing."

"No, that can never be; it is only by mutually understanding each other that confidence can ever be restored. Forgive me, therefore, if I am led to explain myself sooner than I should otherwise have ventured to do, in avowing that, even had no other obstacle existed, the sentiments I entertain for you would have formed an insuperable bar to my complying with my uncle's wishes."

Edith was not overwhelmed by this declaration, for her heart was untouched by it; but, slightly colouring, after a moment's pause she said, "Gratifying as your preference might be to another, I can only regret that it should have been bestowed upon me. My esteem and friendship are yours, as I trusted yours had been mine; but beyond these I can make no return."

"But you will—suffer me to hope you will—when the obstacles which appear to stand in the way at present are removed, as I pledge myself they shall be in a very short time. My uncle loves me too much, and is too easy in his temper, to hold out against my resolution; and even Mrs. Ribley, to do her justice, acts too much upon principle to render her influence dangerous. The provision allotted for me, even in my uncle's lifetime, is amply sufficient to enable me to take that station in society which my birth and family entitle me to claim. The consent of my

uncle, and, if you will, your aunt, once obtained, I flatter myself; you will at least allow me to try the effects of time and perseverance in creating an interest for myself in your regards."

"No, Mr. Penshurst," said Edith, mournfully but firmly, "I will not for one instant deceive you. I am not insensible to the advantages you offer me; I am not ungrateful for the preference you honour me with; but believe me, I speak a language that never can alter, when I say I never can be more to you than I am at this moment—your friend and well-wisher. As such let us part for the present;" and she held out her hand to him, as they now came in sight of Mrs. Macauley's cottage.

Mr. Penshurst seemed to struggle with his emotions, and mortified pride, no less than wounded feeling, showed itself in his countenance: "At least a few days, or even hours, might have been bestowed upon the consideration of my claims to your regard; and still I would flatter myself that courtesy alone will incline you to grant them a more calm and dispassionate consideration than you can possibly do now; a week—a month—a year, if you will; I am content to wait your final decision."

Tears rose to Edith's eyes, while she answered: "Believe me, Mr. Penshurst, the measure would only be one of protracted pain to both of us; my sentiments cannot now waver; what I say to-day I should only repeat a year hence. My best wishes are yours—may God bless you!" They had now reached the

garden gate, and Mrs. Macauley was seen joyfully hastening to meet them.

Again Edith extended her hand to him. He took it in silence, then turned abruptly, and hastened away. Mrs. Macauley looked after him for a few minutes, then shook her head with a significant expression, as she regarded Edith : "He's a fine, genteel, weel-faur'd lad," thought she, half aloud, and as if communing with herself, "and many a one would be glad of him, though maybe he should not look just so high as Glenroy's dochter."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON returning home, Edith found Mr. Ribley still vibrating to the sound of “Refused Miss Mogg, and old Mogg in a dropsy!” If Mrs. Ribley’s suspicions of her nephew’s attachment to Edith had been excited, they now appeared to be completely dispelled by a note just received from him, declaring his intention of setting out for the Continent in a day or two. This was quite conclusive, in her opinion, that she had been for once mistaken in her surmises, and she therefore took the first opportunity of assuring Edith that there appeared not the slightest ground for supposing that Mr. Penshurst had been at all influenced by any secret preference in refusing to pay his addresses to Miss Mogg. Mr. Ribley was too good-natured to retain his displeasure, which, indeed, scarcely ever amounted to anger, however strongly he might express his disappointment; and he therefore hastened to town the following morning, to be reconciled to his somewhat spoiled nephew before he took his departure. Edith felt the loss she had sustained in an agreeable companion, and the dulness and

vacuity that reigned in the family would have been at times almost too much for her spirit to sustain, had it sought support in outward things. But she had "that within which passeth show," even "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," seeking not its own in the things of this world, for of all those which had once been hers she was now bereft; the tenderest ties of nature and of love had been broken asunder ; her pride of ancestry had been abased ; habits of almost prodigal munificence had been exchanged for the galling yoke of poverty and dependence ; even the slight solace of pleasing social intercourse she had been obliged to surrender. A mere worldly mind would have flown from the contemplation of such disasters,—a superstitious one would have given way to gloom and dejection. But the Christian sees in all that befalls him, whether it be good, or whether it seem evil, only the manifestations of Divine love, as exercised in training and preparing the soul for its approach to that perfection which it is one day destined to realise. The value of this great and all-important truth daily pressed itself more strongly on Edith's conviction, and cast its hallowed radiance even across the weary path she was destined to tread. In constant communings with her dear friends at Inch Orran, she had always a source of pure, unmixed pleasure, which, with the fond and simple tokens of her dear old Macky's affection, seemed now the only fragments that remained to her of her former happiness; and these she did not sullenly reject, but

rather cherished with all the warmth of a still susceptible heart.

So passed the time—the only varieties such as were afforded by dull village parties, and occasional airings in the environs with Mr. and Mrs. Ribley, from which she sought to extract such amusement as could be afforded by the objects that met their view. Amongst the many closely-embowered villas which lay on every side, there chanced to be one which more particularly attracted Edith's attention, from the beautiful disposition of the grounds, and the glimpse she caught of the house through the rich and varied foliage, which formed a leafy screen all around, as if, in the true spirit of English seclusion, to hide the home beauties of the scene from the vulgar eyes profane of the passer-by. She inquired of Mr. Ribley to whom it belonged.

"Sure ! don't you know ? Why, that is Woodlands !—belongs to your relation, Lady Waldegrave—sweet pretty place, and such a fine house—never lives there, though ; suppose you were to get an order from her Ladyship to go and see it; and we'll make a party, and ask the Claridges, and the Mudgets, and Mr. and Mrs. Botkins, and Miss Mogg, and a few friends, and have a picnic in the pleasure-grounds. Sure, Kitty, my dear, that would be very pleasant ?"

"And this," thought Edith, as she gazed upon it with mournful feelings, undefinable to herself,—"this is one of Florinda's many fair but neglected homes !" The contrast of her own situation, homeless and de-

pended, swelled her heart with new and painful emotions ; but such feelings were alien to her noble, generous nature, and were quickly dispelled by better thoughts. She shook away the tear which had risen to her eye, and looked serenely on the lovely though deserted 'spot. "And be it so," said she mentally ; "all are the gifts of God, and oh ! may He grant that, wherever her home is, it may be a virtuous and a happy one !"

Mr. Ribley continued to talk of the projected picnic till they returned home ; and Edith had some difficulty in evading his request that she would make immediate application for an order to carry it into effect. But he seemed likely to be gratified sooner than he expected, for, on reaching home, she found the following note, which had been delivered in her absence :—

"MY DEAR EDITH—I have just heard from mamma you are in town, and wish for a card to my ball. I have the greatest pleasure in sending you one, and assure you I shall be quite delighted to see you there. I wish very much I could see you before then, in a quiet, comfortable way ; but, unfortunately, I have not a single day that is not crowded with engagements ; but I trust by-and-by we shall have some pleasant meetings, as mamma tells me you are going to live with some relations at Woody Common, which is in the neighbourhood of Woodlands, and I shall probably be

there for a month or two this summer. In the meantime, I am going to send my little boy there for change of air, after the hooping-cough. I have such perfect confidence in the people who are about him, that I know he will be quite as safe as under my own eye, and I shall make a point of seeing him as often as I possibly can. But I should think it very kind, dearest Edith, if you would go and see him occasionally ; it would really be the greatest possible comfort to me, and do tell him some little stories, for he quite doats upon stories. It almost breaks my heart to part with him, even at so short a distance ! Tell me, if you don't think him an angel ? Adieu, dearest, dear Edith. I do hope you will come to my ball. And believe me, ever and ever, your affectionate friend and sister,

FLORINDA WALDEGRAVE.

"Waldegrave House, Sunday.

"*P.S.*—If you do think of my ball, as I hope you will, pray consult my milliner, Madame Duval. She is ruinous, but her taste is perfection. And, for Heaven's sake, beware of mamma's friend and counsellor, Madame la Roque ! I enclose a general order for your admittance to Woodlands, but I must be very exclusive against admitting the village folks, while Dudley remains there."

A momentary flush burned on Edith's cheek at the heartless, unfeeling impertinence of this billet ; but it passed quickly away, and was followed by a sigh of regret at the thought how ill its selfish, unfeeling

levity augured for herself and others. One thing particularly struck her—was it delicacy or indifference that withheld her from once mentioning her husband's name? It could scarcely be the former; for of true delicacy of mind Lady Waldegrave had shown herself hitherto incapable; and Edith shuddered to think it could be the latter: she attached so little credit to Lady Elizabeth's testimony, that her insinuations had produced no effect upon her mind. But this equivocal silence seemed but too much in accordance with them. Should it be so, she thought, how little are her outward circumstances to be envied! Edith knew not yet half the selfish egotism of a fine lady. It cost her a struggle to write a reply to the note. Her worldly feelings shrank from the task; but her better and more Christian principles prevailed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IT may be supposed that Mrs. Macauley's artlessness, and, indeed, ignorant good-nature, exposed her in no common degree to the various arts of deception as practised in civilised communities, and which are commonly found to keep pace with the increasing refinement and luxury of society. While in London she was a prey to every species of petty imposture with which its streets abound ; at least as far as her limited means admitted. Her large pockets were daily replenished with halfpence for the beggars ; her room was filled with trash bought as bargains from the worthless hawkers who beset the passengers ; all which, to her surprise and mortification, turned to naught in her hands ; and the authority of the wise Johnnie himself had been scarcely sufficient to restrain her from turning his house, small as it was, into a house of refuge for persons of no doubtful character. Her zeal was good, but it lacked knowledge. Even in her rambles on the Common, or its more secluded paths, few days passed without her meeting with some extraordinary claim upon her wonder, admiration, sympathy, or charity. Edith

was therefore too much accustomed to interesting stories, and had seen too many proofs of the fallacy of her good friend's judgment, to feel any very lively interest in the objects of her generous but mistaken ardour. She was therefore but little moved when Mrs. Macauley entered her room one morning at a very early hour, and with even more than her wonted animation and intelligence beaming on her face. "I daresay you will wonder to see me so early, my dear," said she, seating herself, almost out of breath; "but 'deed I could not wait for your coming to me, for I have been scarcely able to sleep for thinking of what I met with last night."

"Dear Macky! that is too serious, if your adventures are to rob you of your rest as well as of your money," said Edith.

"Oh, not a bit I grudge my sleep any more than the pickle siller, when I have it to give; but it was my own fault that I did not sleep any last night; but I could not get him out of my head, do as I would."

"I hope you have not taken this same unknown into your heart, for, large as that is, I think it can scarcely be capacious enough to contain all that you are inclined to open it to; besides, dear Macky," added she, smiling, "you must own I should sometimes find myself in such strange company!"

"Well, well, but you need not be feared this time, my dear, for I'll let nobody dwell there that is any ways disagreeable to you; but I'm sure as I'm alive you would not object to him if you but saw him.

However, I'm not going to say black or white about him, for I know very well that you rather misdoubt me now ; to be sure I have been sometimes mistaken as well as my neighbours, and I'll not say but what I have been a little unfortunate in my good opinions ; but for all that, I have my senses still, for which I am very thankful, even though I maybe do not turn them to so much good as some better and wiser people might do."

For the first time in her life Mrs. Macauley spoke to Glenroy's daughter in a tone slightly indicative of pique.

"Dearest Macky, forgive me," cried Edith, embracing her, "and do not look so grave, if you would not have me dislike your new friend for having caused me to offend my own old and valued one."

"My darling, it's not in the power of Glenroy's dochter to offend me ; and the creature's not living that I would put into comparison with you for your own sake. I'm only a wee vexed that I cannot get you to believe, that is, to understand, or—or to comprehend ; but 'deed I do not know that I do it right myself."

"No matter," said Edith, smiling, "only tell me what it is you wish me to know, and I will do my best to comprehend it ; but now, let us set out upon our ramble this lovely morning." And taking her old friend's arm within hers, Edith and she set out most lovingly to enjoy the pure air and balmy fragrance of a delightful summer morning.

"Well, then, my dear, this is what I was going to tell you. You know what a sweet evening it was when we parted last night ; so after I had got to my own door, I thought I would just go and ask after that poor ne'er-do-weel creature that I told you about. I went to his mother's, and I got very little satisfaction, but that cannot be helped ; so as I was coming home by the t'other side of the Common, which, you know, is very wild and lonesome, especially at night, 'deed I began to think whether I was not rather fool-hardy to be walking there by myself at that time ; then I thought of how many stories of robberies and murders I had heard upon people no better or richer than myself, and what ugly pits and places there were among the whins ; no doubt it was very foolish in me to be thinking of such things in such a place, and no creature near me. Well, what do you think, but at that very moment I saw a person on a fine tall horse coming riding straight up as it were to me ; then if I was not frichtened ! and my heart began to beat like anything. However, I thought I would put the best face I could upon it, and not let on that I thought any mischief of him ; so I pretended as if I had been just looking at the bonny young moon ; but I cast the tail of my ee at him for all that, and I tried to sing, but 'deed my voice was not very steady. Well, just at that moment he rode close up to me, and what does he do but jump off his horse, and grip both my hands in his ! Oh ! I really thought I was as good as robbed and mur-

dered, and I gave such a skreegh! With that he let me go, but he looked me in the face, and then I saw the tears in his eyes; so I took heart at that, and says I, ‘Sir, oh, I’m but a very poor person, but you shall be welcome to all that I have in my pocket, if you will please to do me no harm.’ Still he did not speak, but he stood as if he had not heard me, and I saw his lip quiver, and his heart heave as if he was in distress; so then I got more courage, and thinks I, this is a poor young creature that has maybe an old mother, or a sick wife, or some starving children, that’s driven him out to do this; so I took more heart, and said, ‘I see, sir, you have not been used to this sinful life, and I hope you never will. I have nothing but a poor sixpence, a few bawbees, and a silver thimble, in my pocket (I quite forgot that I had my watch at my side), which, if they can do you any good, are at your service, and an old woman’s blessing into the bargain.’ Well, even wi’ the tear in his ee, he gave such a sweet smile—I cannot forget it—and then he said, ‘I beg your pardon for the alarm I have occasioned you, and for the liberty I took with you; but I am not what you suppose—I am no robber.’

“ ‘Deed then, you do not look like one,’ says I, ‘and I hope, for the sake of the mother that bore you, as well as for your own, you never will be one; but if you only wanted to frichten me, I do not think it was very well done of you.’

“ ‘No, no,’ said he, quite earnestly, ‘that was far

from my intention. I took you for an old friend—one who is associated in my mind with all that is dear to me ;' and then he stopped, and I saw him just gulping down his very thoughts, as it were ; and then he said, 'Can you—will you forgive me ?'

" 'Deed that I will, with all my heart,' says I ; 'and I think all the better of you, too, for the fricht you gave me, now that I know the reason of it.'

" 'Well, then,' says he, 'to show that you no longer mistrust me, you must allow me to see you safe home ;' and before I knew where I was, there we were walking arm-in-arm, chatting to one another as if we had been friends all our days. Now is not that very surprising ?'

" Why, it would certainly be something of an adventure with anybody but you ; but I think I have heard you relate still more marvellous incidents in your life," said Edith.

" But wait till you hear the end of it, my dear. Well, we went on this way, him leading his horse with one hand, and me hanging on his t'other arm, and he told all how it was he happened to give me such a fright ; that he had been dining with a friend in this neighbourhood, and was riding back to town, but lost his way, or at least was not sure about it ; and so when he saw me coming, he thought he would just ride up to me, and ask me to direct him ; and then the moment he set his eyes upon me, as I told you before, he was so struck with my likeness to an old friend that he had not seen from the time he was a

boy, that, as he said, he quite forgot himself. Now, was not that very naatral?"

In the true Scotch style, to answer one question with another, "Have you still got your watch?" inquired Edith, with a smile. Mrs. Macauley reddened.

"Oh, not a bit of that question is like yourself, now. 'Deed, and I wish that your heart, that was so innocent and unsuspicuous, may not be getting corrupted and like the rest of the world, just with dwelling amongst such unclean creatures! My watch! 'deed, then, he was far more like to give me a watch, if I had wanted such a thing, than to have taken it from me! Oh, my darling, beware of hasty judgments; they ill become us, poor, ignorant, sinful creatures that we are."

"Forgive me, dearest Macky; but you know it is but a minute since you introduced your hero to me as a highwayman."

"But did not I tell you, my dear, that was nothing but a foolish fancy of my own? and one I've thought much shame of ever since; for if I had not been quite stupefied with my own senseless fricht, I never could have seen his face and thought ill could come of it."

"Yet 'tis but a few days since you declared you would never trust to appearances again after the——"

"Well, well, my dear, but that was quite a different thing; and no doubt there are many fair faces that hide foul hearts, just as there are many worthy, respectable, ill-faured people. My own good Mr. Macauley, many people thought, was not very pretty, because

of his being pock-marked ; but he was very fair to my sight, for there's no face like the face that loves us."

" You say true," said Edith, with a sigh, as she thought how few were the faces that now looked on her with love and gladness.

" Well, then, my dear, is not that one good reason for my being so well pleased with this young gentleman that I was telling you about ? Not a bit but he says he is so fond of my face, for it puts him so much in mind of an old friend's ; and, 'deed, he looked at me with such sweet, earnest eyes, I could not but believe him."

" And so you gave him your last guinea," said Edith, with a smile.

" Oh, my dear, but it grieves me to think you should be grown so uncharitable in your words, when I'm sure it is not in your nature. 'Deed, I could almost find in my heart not to tell you any more."

" Ah, pray let me hear the conclusion of your tale, or romance, or whatever it may be. Dear Macky, I am only sorry that so much goodness should so often meet such bad returns."

" But you need not vex yourself about that this time, my dear, for there's nothing of the kind that will be likely to happen, as you shall hear. 'Well,' says I, 'it's very surprising that it seems to me as if I had known you too somewhere, but I cannot for the life of me say where.' 'Perhaps,' says he, 'in some former state of existence, and therefore let us look upon this as the renewal of old friendship, which is a

much better thing than the beginning of a new one ; don't you think so ?' 'Deed, and I do,' says I, 'though I am not altogether sure about a former state, as we have no authority for it ; but maybe I have seen you at Glenroy Castle, for I used to see so many grand and genteel people there that I cannot remember either the faces or the names of one-half of them.' But just then he stopped to sort the bridle of his horse, and did not attend to what I was saying. So, after he had put it to rights, he said, 'I beg your pardon ; to whom does Glenroy Castle belong ?' So I told him how it had belonged to your family for generations, and how it had pleased Providence to put it past your good papa's family ; and then my heart was full, and so I told him more maybe than I should have done ; and so we went on cracking together till we came to the door of my cottage ; then I was going to wish him a good night, when he looked about him, and said, 'What a sweet little dwelling you have got here ; how I wish I could find just such another in this neighbourhood, for I want lodgings in the country.' So I told him it was not my own, but belonged to a very decent couple, who let part of it for lodgings, and that I knew they had two rooms at the t'other end of it to let. Well, just as I was speaking, out came Mrs. Smith herself ; and so the short and the long of it is, that he took her lodgings for three months, and is to enter upon them to-morrow. Now what do you think of that, my dear ? Is that like a robber, think you ?'

This went so far beyond Edith's worst anticipations that she actually turned pale with fear, as she thought of the evil consequences that might ensue to her poor old friend from having got thus involved (as she had no doubt) with some artful swindler; and she exclaimed, "How could Mrs. Smith be so imprudent as to take an utter stranger into her house?"

"Oh, 'deed Mrs. Smith's but a narrow-minded suspicious body; for she hummed and hawed, and spoke about references and securities; but I said she need not mind that, for I would be answerable for him."

"Oh, Macky, this is really too much!" cried Edith, shocked at the imprudence of her good old guardian.

"Well, my dear, but you should wait till you hear me out. So then Mrs. Smith said that was sufficient. 'So then,' says I, 'if you please, I would take the liberty to ask your name. My own name is Macauley, now in my seventieth year.' Well, at that his face was overcast, and he hung his head for a minute or two with a very mournful look, and I saw his colour come and go; and 'deed I was beginning to feel not quite so satisfied, when he lifted up his head, and looked at me with his full, clear, blue eyes. But when I saw his fine open face, I wondered at myself for my misgiving, and then he said, 'I am called Melcombe.' Well, then, I thought very naturally that he meant Malcolm (for you know the English have such a way of clipping everything away to

nothing) ; so I could not but cry out, what a wonderful thing that was, for that surely he must be some relation of the family, though he did not know it. But he sighed and said, ‘The names were different ;’ and then (what I thought was very well-bred) he said, ‘He would be very glad to change the one name for the other.’ And was that like a robber, think you ?”

Edith saw it was in vain to attempt to open the eyes of Mrs. Macauley’s understanding as to the dangerous predicament she had brought herself into by introducing a person of so suspicious a character to the family with whom she lodged, and making herself responsible for his conduct. This was the very climax of her Quixotism. Edith now felt the want of some friend and counsellor to whom she could apply for advice ; for dauntless as is the heart of woman on great and heroic occasions, still, in the coarser occurrences of this working-day world, she is ill qualified by nature or education for taking a part ; for truly has it been said, “Women are hopelessly and incurably unfitted for business.”

Edith experienced this, as she vainly tried to devise some means for extricating her old friend from this dilemma ; but she could do nothing herself, and there was no one to whom she could apply. She would not expose her to the Ribleys, for they were quite incapable of appreciating the excellency of her character, and comprehending the simplicity and purity of her motives and actions, and she shrank from the thoughts of subjecting either herself or her

poor Macky to the cold inquisitorial scrutiny of Mrs. Ribley, or the senseless loquacious tattle of her husband. The only scheme that presented itself was to try to persuade Mrs. Macauley to write to her nephew, the wise Johnnie, acquainting him with what had passed, and requesting of him to endeavour to find out what description of person it was she had now involved herself with. Should that fail, she could only wait with patience the result of this strange, suspicious adventure.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ACCORDINGLY, the following morning Edith set forth as usual for the cottage, and found the ever-active Macky chanting away to herself,—

“ What beauties does Flora disclose,
How sweet are her smiles upon Tweed,”

as she was diligently culling a nosegay of the sweetest and the fairest for her beloved *élève*, while her Bible and her stocking lay near her on a rustic seat, canopied with honeysuckles. After the first affectionate salutations and tender inquiries were made on both sides, and Edith, as was her custom, had read to her old friend a portion of that book whose words were as balm to them both, she began to suggest her scheme with as much delicacy and finesse as possible ; but she had not proceeded far before she was interrupted.

“ I beg your pardon, my dear, for interrupting you, which I know is not good breeding ; but I see very well how it is ; you are vexing yourself with the thought that maybe I will be put in prison for having been caution for that young man, Mr. Melcombe. Am I not right ?”

"Not quite so bad as that, dear Macky," said Edith ; "your friends would never allow that to come to pass, I am sure."

"Well, whatever it is, you may make yourself easy, for I can tell you he has paid the price of his lodgings in advance for three months before he entered upon them ; for he said he could not expect them to take the word of a stranger, and neither would he take advantage of my generous confidence in him (or something like that) ; now, I do not think that is very like a robber. Oh, my dear, should not this be a lesson to us to beware of forming such rash and hasty judgments of one another ?"

Edith smiled to hear Mrs. Macauley's application of the terms rash and hasty, but she was in part relieved to find she was free from the responsibility she had so thoughtlessly incurred. Still she had some vague misgivings as to the character of the person with whom she had formed this sudden and somewhat suspicious intimacy. With all Mrs. Macauley's excellences, she certainly was not a person to captivate a young man at first sight. Neither could a stranger, who was ignorant of the qualities of her heart, be supposed to enter into the peculiarities of her manners and the simplicity of her conversation. Even allowing that her resemblance to an old friend had first attracted his notice, yet that resemblance must soon have disappeared on a more intimate recognition ; for it was scarcely possible there could be two Mrs. Macauleys in the world. "Yet why, after all, should I be

so uncharitable in my suspicions?" she thought; "this poor stranger, whom I am so harshly condemning, may, like myself, be almost alone in the world; and his heart may have yearned, as my own would have done, towards even the fancied resemblance of one known and beloved in happier days." While thoughts like these were passing through her mind, Mrs. Macaulay was doing the best she could to aid the more favourable change that was taking place in Edith's sentiments.

"Oh, if you were to see him, my dear, I'm sure you would almost think shame of yourself for ever having evened him to anything that was bad! But maybe you'll not see him at all; for he says he wishes to live very retired, though he has some friends in the neighbourhood. I told him that I thought it would be very dull for him to live here without he had some other company than me; for that 'deed my best days were fled, and I was not so merry as I had been."

"'No more am I,' says he, with a sigh, 'so we shall suit very well in that respect; and when I am here I do not desire any better company than your own.'"

Again Edith's suspicions returned. "And does he assign no reason for the love of retirement beyond that of enjoying the pleasure of your company?"

"Not yet; but I daresay he will tell me all about himself by-and-by; consider, my dear, how very short a time it is since we have been acquainted."

"I do, dear Macky ; and therefore I cannot but wonder that your friendship should have made such rapid progress in so short a time."

"There's no accounting for these things, my dear," replied her friend gravely ; "and we ought to be very thankful when a blessing comes in our way, and not be too curious in examining into it, and taking it to pieces to see what's in it, just like the children with their toys. Oh, if we had but the spirit of truth and thankfulness, how many a pearl we might find in our daily paths, that now in our pride and unbelief we trample under our feet ! But with regard to this young gentleman, his health is maybe one reason that he wishes to be quiet ; for when I saw him in daylight yesterday he looked very pale, and he told me that he was but just recovering from an illness, so he would need somebody to take care of him, for he looks like one that could not take care of himself."

"Well, dear Macky, I shall rejoice if you have found a real acquisition in your new friend—one who will cheer you in the many lonely hours you must pass while I am engaged with my aunt."

"Speaking of that, my dear, I really think it would maybe be just as well to say nothing about this to Mr. and Mrs. Ribley for a little while, just till I know all about Mr. Melcombe, which I have no doubt will be very soon ; for though they are very good people, and very discreet to me, yet I think they are not just so—so——"

"So credulous as you are, dear Macky," said Edith, laughing, as she embraced her in taking leave ; "well, I shall keep your secret for you in the meantime, but don't tax my forbearance too long."

Several days passed, and still no new disclosure was made, though Mrs. Macauley's infatuation for her new friend seemed daily to increase, in spite of the reserve he maintained.

"I don't know how it is," said she, with a perplexed air, one day, in answer to Edith's renewed remonstrances ; "for he is anything but reserved—quite the contrary ; for he tells me a great deal that I never knew before ; and he takes pleasure, too, in hearing me tell him all that I know, which, to be sure, is not much. But whenever I speak to him of his family the cloud comes over his open brow, and he changes the subject ; so I'm thinking they may be no great things, any of them ; and it would be very ill done in me to distress him by seeking to pry into his private affairs."

Edith again felt how vain was reason or argument, when opposed to prejudice or partiality, and wisely forbore to press the matter further. She resolved, however, to watch over the interests of her old friend as zealously as she could, and upon no account to suffer herself to be led into an acquaintance with one whom she could not yet consider as anything but a mere adventurer. She had little doubt but that Mrs. Macauley, in the simplicity of her heart, had acquainted him with her suspicions ; and, either from

delicacy or conscious deception, he seemed to be equally bent upon keeping his distance. Although his apartments had a separate entrance at the other end of the cottage, yet the window of his sitting-room opened upon the garden ; and from the smallness of the cottage and its boundaries, Edith was convinced he must often be near them. It therefore required no common care in one of its inmates to preserve such strict seclusion. Mrs. Macauley, indeed, represented him as much occupied in study of some kind or another, and that the only relaxations he allowed himself were a ride on horseback and a friendly chat with her. But, with all these friendly chats, however, there came not that confidential communication which his friend daily looked for ; but still she kept a stout heart even against “hope deferred.”

CHAPTER XXX.

EDITH went to visit Lady Waldegrave's child ; and though she looked upon him with interest, it was interest free from all emotion—proof sufficient, had any been required, that the dreams of her early love had completely died away, never more to return. The boy was, indeed, a paragon of childish loveliness ; and already the delicate, yet majestic contour of his head and features, and the grace and elegance of his air and movements, indicated the child of high descent. Youth, beauty, and sweetness combined are sure to win their way to every heart, and Edith soon gained the good graces of her little relative—at least, as much as any one can ever gain upon the love of a very indulged and pampered child. He testified great repugnance towards Mr. and Mrs. Ribley, whose awkward overtures he rejected with disdain. From whatever cause he might suffer, it certainly, to all appearance, could not be from neglect, as he was most zealously attended by a French *Bonne*, his Italian nurse, and German footman, all of whom seemed sedulous to please and amuse the little idol committed

to their charge. The Ribleys were too fond of seeing sights not to avail themselves of this opportunity of seeing all that was to be seen ; and Edith, ever willing to gratify others, even at the expense of her own feelings, accepted the offer of viewing the house and grounds, and thus allowed herself to be associated with them in all the little, mean, prying ways in which vulgar people delight to go about a great house. There was much to admire. The house, of the purest style of Italian architecture, stood on a gentle eminence ; the velvet lawn was studded with beds of the richest and rarest flowers and shrubs, while trees of stately growth were scattered here and there, till the ground gradually sloped to the noble river which formed its boundary. All that taste and wealth could do to embellish nature had been bestowed on this, as it seemed, cherished though now deserted abode.

The interior of the house would have required taste more cultivated and refined than those of the Ribleys to appreciate. The entrance hall was filled with noble specimens of sculpture ; the apartments were adorned with some of the finest works of the Italian masters ; and in one, appropriated entirely to the works of modern artists, there were placed two of the happiest efforts of Sir Thomas's pencil, in full lengths of Sir Reginald and Lady Waldegrave. It was but a momentary throb of surprise with Edith when she came suddenly and unexpectedly upon the all but breathing form of her faithless lover, and

when it passed away, she stood, and looked calmly, though sadly upon it, as upon the face of one who had injured her, but with whom she was now at peace. The servant pointed to a door which conducted, he said, to Lady Waldegrave's private apartments ; but her Ladyship had given positive orders that they should upon no account be shown until they were put in order, for a first-rate artist and his people were employed in unpacking the various articles purchased by Sir Reginald and her Ladyship when abroad.

Mr. Ribley's curiosity, in the true spirit of cockneyism, became very importunate on hearing of the locked-up apartments ; he seemed to think nothing of what he had seen, in comparison of what he had not seen, and he lingered behind, and even peeped through the key-hole, in hopes of spying something to make a wonder of ; but in vain—he could make nothing of it ; and he was fain to return home, exclaiming, ever and anon, “ Well, to be sure ! what can be in these apartments ?—should just like to know—can't guess ; can you, Kitty, my dear ? ” For some days Mr. Ribley could talk of nothing but what he had *not* seen. Soon after her visit, Edith received the following billet from Lady Waldegrave :—

“ DEAREST DEAR EDITH—I am so much obliged to you for going to see my darling Dudley ; it was quite a comfort to me to hear you had been at Woodlands. And I hope they showed you everything, and gave

you fruit and flowers ? I have a letter every day from Mademoiselle Le Clerc, with a bulletin of my sweetest boy ; but still I shall be glad if you will continue to visit him now and then. There is another thing, my dear Edith, which I must beg your good offices in, and I shall not tease you with apologies, as I know you too well to doubt your readiness to oblige. You must know that mamma has taken it into her head that she requires change of air, which, indeed, is very probable, as the weather is now so very hot. I wish her of all things to go to the sea-side, or at any rate to some distance from town. I have even offered her Waldegrave Abbey for the summer, as we shall not go there till very late in the season ; but she persists in wishing to take possession of Woodlands, which would be the most inconvenient thing in the world for me, as it is all in confusion at present with my *foreign gear*, and I cannot have it put to rights till I am on the spot myself ; and to get anything done as it ought to be done while mamma is in the house, you must be aware, would be quite impossible ; besides there is not accommodation for us both. Now, what I wish you to do, dear Edith, is to take the trouble to find a furnished house which you think would be suitable for her, as near to where you are as possible. She is really fond of you ; and as she is of course in the best society, it would also be an advantage to you to be with her. Now, I do hope you will be able to gratify me in this, and the sooner you can accomplish it the better. You would see by the papers how

illustrious and renowned Sir Reginald has become upon the turf !

“ Adieu, my dear,
“ Believe me ever, your affectionate,

“ F. WALDEGRAVE.

“ Mamma does not require a large house, you know ; only don’t let it be vulgar—and citish.”

This commission, it may be supposed, was not of a nature for Edith to undertake, and she wrote Lady Waldegrave briefly and coldly, declining to execute the ungracious office.

In a few days, however, she received a billet from Lady Elizabeth, apprising her of her arrival in the neighbourhood in a very indifferent state of health, and requesting to see her immediately, as she had much to communicate. As her Ladyship’s carriage accompanied the summons, Edith had no excuse to offer for not complying with it ; and she accordingly set off, charged by Mr. Ribley to endeavour to find out what sort of things were in the locked-up rooms at Woodlands, and when he was likely to get a sight of them.

She found Lady Elizabeth in a charming cottage *ornée*, within a beautiful park ; but the inmate of this little Elysium formed a sad contrast to the loveliness that bloomed around. She looked haggard and worn out, and was in one of her most peevish and irritable moods of mind. The day was sultry, yet she reclined,

with her dogs and parrots around her, by the side of a blazing fire, with curtains, as usual, almost close drawn.

"You find me excessively unwell, my dear," said she, in answer to Edith's inquiries; "and I impute much of my illness to the treatment I have received from that shocking man, your cousin, and from my own daughter. But pray ring the bell; this is the time when my dogs ought to have their walk. Go, darlings, go. Pray, Dawson, be careful of them, and carry Amor when he appears fatigued. There now, my sweets," kissing each severally as she dismissed them, to Edith's great relief. "Yes, I have been excessively ill-used, which, together with the injudicious treatment of that wretch Belloni, has almost killed me. Thank Heaven, I got rid of him, and I have got the best and most skilful man possible, Monsieur Lamotte—quite a treasure! But the cruelty and ingratitude I have experienced—I—I—Do ring quickly, for I must have my drops! it makes me quite ill to think of it! I am so faint!"

Monsieur Lamotte obeyed the summons. He was a grimacing, high-dressed, under-bred Frenchman; but he knew his cue, and having cajoled his patient, and administered some drops, he was then allowed to depart; and her Ladyship was returning to the subject, when Edith besought her to refrain from it, since it was one which agitated her so much. But, like all weak people, she liked the excitement of her own paltry feelings, and went on:

"It is but too apparent that I have been very unwell ; however, it was merely a sort of nervous attack, that anybody might have, and which Lamotte assures me will entirely pass away, and that in a few weeks I shall be quite myself again. But I found it impossible to be quiet in town ; when one is so much *recherché* that is out of the question ; so, by the advice of the medical people, and indeed at Florinda's earnest entreaty, I resolved to try the effect of change of air, and proposed to go to Woodlands for a few weeks. Besides liking the place itself, I was sure it would amuse me to superintend the arrangements making there ; the pictures, marbles, and all sorts of pretty things that my daughter purchased abroad ; and, in short, I told Florinda I should wish to go to her house for a short time. Only conceive her telling me that was impossible, for that Sir Reginald and she were going themselves very soon, and had invited more people than the house could hold to celebrate their child's birthday ! You may believe how excessively angry I was, and we had quite a *scène*. But she cried, poor dear, and said how it distressed her to refuse me, but that, in short, she dared not disobey her husband. 'And so, because you have a bad husband, you must be an undutiful daughter !' said I ; and I told her that she ought not to pay the least regard to the wishes of such a person ; that she had done him already too much honour by marrying him ; and I even hinted that, rather than submit to such tyranny, she ought to separate from him."

Edith was shocked at this new proof of Florinda's duplicity, in throwing the blame of her own selfish and undutiful behaviour on her husband, and thus setting at variance those she ought to have been most desirous of uniting in affection. She therefore strove by every means to soften the injury, and soothe the irritated feelings of the despised, yet still doting parent ; and there are few natures that are not benefited, in some degree, by the bland voice of sympathy. Lady Elizabeth's manner became less feverish and irascible as she proceeded : “Yes, it is all very well as it has turned out. This is a pretty tiny cottage, and my dogs are quite safe in the park, no thanks to my daughter, though, poor dear, it was no fault of hers either ; but my good cousin, Lady Arabella Conway, happened to call at the very time when Florinda and I were both a little agitated with what had passed, and so I told her exactly how it was ; and she—the best creature in the world—next day sent to offer me this cottage, which had been built by Admiral Conway for his mother, and, in short, *me voici* ; and though I am not particularly fond of a cottage, yet it suits me, with my very limited income, to have a house without paying for it.” Thus she ran on, till the return of her dogs from their walk, when Edith would fain have left her to the pleasures of their society ; but her step-mother was not willing to part with her so easily, for even she could feel, though she could not properly appreciate, the harmonising influence of Edith’s presence,—that gentle forbearance, and total absence of all

selfish egotism, which are charms in themselves of no negative description. On her part Edith compassionated the mother, such as she was, thus disregarded and cast off by her own, her only child. Weak and frivolous as she was, she trusted her mind might yet be turned to better things ; and that bad health and disappointment might lead her, as they had done many others, to relinquish those vanities which only served to mock and cheat her hopes. With these benevolent views Edith consented to pass a week or two with her stepmother, provided Mrs. Ribley would give up her prior claims upon her ; and having promised, at all events, to see her as often as she could, she at length departed.

In her way home she stopped at Mrs. Macauley's humble abode, and, upon entering her little parlour, found that worthy, with a face of deep deliberation, musing upon the contents of a letter she held in her hand. The letter was from the wise Johnnie, and the purport of it was to this effect—that Mrs. J. Macauley and he would take it very kind if their good aunt would return to them as soon as possible, Archie having just been sent home from school with the modified smallpox—the baby having got St. Anthony's fire—they had had to turn off the nursery maid, etc. etc. etc. ; the whole concluding with a request that his good aunt would remain till after Mrs. Macauley's confinement.

“ This is certainly not an alluring invitation, dear Macky,” said Edith, as she finished reading the letter.

"Oh, my dear, as to that I do not mind, or rather I ought to be very thankful that, in my seventieth year, I can be of any use in the world, when many a one is just a burden and a reproach ; but what vexes me is the thoughts of leaving you." Here the tears rose to her eyes as she gazed fondly on her darling *élève*.

"And I shall miss you, my own dear, kind friend," said Edith, equally affected ; "but that is not what is to be considered. At your age it is really too much to call upon you to encounter so much fatigue and anxiety and discomfort."

"My dear, at no age are we ever unable to serve God in some shape or other ; that is our destiny from beginning to end ; and how can I serve God so well as by serving His children and my fellow-creatures ? and maybe I did not think of serving Him so much as I should have done in my younger days, and I ought to be very grateful in being permitted to do it in my old age ; so I will just put my foot in one of the coaches to-morrow morning."

Edith knew the generous devotedness of the good old woman too well to attempt to turn her from the path of her duty. The claims of Glenroy's daughter only would she have considered superior to those of Mr. Macauley's nephew ; but as she did not stand in need of her services at that time, the claims of Johnnie Macauley were paramount to all others. Those only who love the country as much as Mrs. Macauley did can fully appreciate the sacrifice she made in quitting

her sweet rural dwelling, with its flowers and birds and busy bees, for the crowded city, the noise of a small inconvenient house, and the strife of sickly, unruly children.

"Another thing I am really sorry for," said she to Edith, "besides parting from you, is the leaving that fine interesting young man, Mr. Melcombe, without getting his history, which I have no doubt I would have done if we had been to stay much longer together; and then I would have liked so well to have made you acquainted with each other! I'm as sure as I'm alive you would have come to be very fond of one another, for I think there's a something, I cannot tell what—a sort of resemblance, as it were, in your ways of thinking, for he is every bit as good as you, my dear—in his sentiments I mean. As to one another's hearts, you know we cannot tell what's in them." And with many a tender embrace, hopes of meeting soon, and promises of writing often, Edith took leave of her dear old friend, who was to set off betimes the following morning.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FROM this time scarcely a day passed in which Lady Elizabeth did not either come in person, or send her carriage with an invitation amounting to a demand on Edith, till at length nothing could satisfy her but that she should take up her residence with her entirely for a few weeks. Edith would fain have excused herself; not that it was worse to be with her than with the Ribleys, but that she shrank from the thought of being brought into intercourse with Sir Reginald and Lady Waldegrave, as she doubtless would be, if an inmate of her stepmother's family. But Lady Elizabeth disliked contradiction too much ever to submit to it when she could help it, and, bent upon carrying her point, she made a direct appeal to Mrs. Ribley, who, flattered by this condescension, at once decided upon the propriety of Edith's accepting her Ladyship's invitation. It also happened to suit her own plans particularly well, as Mr. Ribley and she were meditating their annual trip to Cheltenham with their good friend Mrs. Rose Popkin, who, for the last fifteen years, had been their travelling companion. And as Edith could not be taken with com-

fort to them, nor left with propriety by herself, this mode of disposing of her was the very thing that seemed to suit all parties. Accordingly, Edith had to acquiesce with the best grace she could to take up her abode for the present at Oak Cottage.

In one respect Edith was benefited by the change. Although the great proportion of Lady Elizabeth's visitors probably did not rank much higher in the moral and intellectual scale than Mrs. Ribley's, still their manners were more elegant, and their conversation more refined. As intelligent beings, or rational companions, they were perhaps no better; but as mere passing acquaintances they were certainly superior. Pre-eminent amongst them were the kind owners of her little demesne, Admiral and Lady Arabella Conway: the former a still handsome, though somewhat disabled-looking man, with open countenance, fine bald head, frank, bluff manners, and a sort of hasty, peremptory good nature. Descended from noble ancestry, Lady Arabella inherited the dignity without the pride of birth, and possessed that inherent nobility of mind which sheds its own native lustre upon the adventitious gifts of fortune. She was nearly related to Lady Elizabeth; they had spent much of their childhood and youth together; and her goodness of heart led her still to feel an affection, and take an interest even in the vapid, frivolous being, with whom there existed no other affinity. Edith had been charmed with the unaffected sweetness and dignified simplicity of Lady Arabella's

manners, and expressed the prepossession she felt towards her to Lady Elizabeth.

"Yes, my cousin *is* a very good woman, though *un peu dévote*. You know, I suppose, that she was a daughter of the Duke of Derrington's, and you may still see she has been handsome ; but she and I made our *début* together, and somehow I—in short, Lady Arabella, though the best creature in the world, produced no sensation whatever, while I"—here her Ladyship gave one of her little haggard smiles, and Edith smiled too as she contrasted the natural dignity and charming, serene countenance of Lady Arabella with the withered, shrivelled goblin at her side ;—"however, she might have made *un bon parti*, it was said ; but she chose to make a love match, and married the Honourable Captain, now Admiral Conway. However, after all, it has turned out well ; he has got a handsome fortune somehow, and she has been excessively lucky in disposing of her family ; her daughters are both greatly married, one to Lord Ellersley, eldest son of the Duke of Tadcaster, the other to Lord Beechley. Her sons have also made great alliances, and are in very good situations ; so that she may have a great deal of power and patronage if she chooses. The Admiral has a charming house in this neighbourhood, where we shall go some day when I feel quite able ; but he is become very lame, and rather deaf, and it quite kills me to raise my voice ; indeed Dr. Lamotte is of opinion that my complaints are of an incipient pulmonary nature,

and recommends my going abroad before winter, which I shall certainly do, otherwise my voice will be completely ruined. Dr. Price allowed me to exert myself a great deal too much ; and I ought not to have been permitted to see your poor, dear father when I was last in Scotland ; in fact I lost three notes by being obliged to raise my voice to him ; if Dr. Price had not been a fool, he never would have allowed it. Then, you know, I had that odious German, who drank beer and smoked ! shocking and foolish ! but we won't talk of that. As for Belloni, he was the most mercenary creature in the world, and, I do assure you, thought much more of his own fortune than of my health ; however, I trust, by care, and the uncommon skill of Dr. Lamotte, I shall get round in time."

In a far different strain was a letter from Mrs. Macauley, exulting in her own humble way at the various uses to which she was put, and very triumphant at a visit she had had from Mr. Melcombe, who had bought and *paid for* a handsome gold watch of Johnnie's own making ; the communication ending with the usual interrogation, "Was that like a robber, my dear ?"

The distance between Oakley House and the Cottage was so short that scarcely a day passed without some intercourse taking place with the generous, kind-hearted pair, who possessed not less the will than the power to promote the comfort of their neighbours. Edith's prepossession in favour of Lady Arabella daily

ripened into a warmer sentiment of affection, and was met by corresponding feelings on the part of that lady. But as Lady Elizabeth had all the exclusiveness of a little mind, she would have been quite jealous of this increasing intimacy had she imagined there was more in it than attention to her *protegée*. For the first time since she left Inch Orran Edith found herself in society congenial no less to her principles than to her taste and feelings. Lady Arabella reminded her much of her dear Mrs. Malcolm. There was in both the same benign spirit of Christianity, shedding its divine halo over the daily actions of life, not dwelling on their tongues, but reigning in their hearts, making their light to shine before men, but never using it to burn the conscience of those who differed from themselves. The same bland, genial spirit seemed to pervade her family; her daughters, with all the true refinement of birth and breeding, were free from the pitiful frivolities and paltry airs of fashion. They sought not in its "weak beggarly elements" either for happiness or distinction, but—young, beautiful, rich, and noble—they dared be "wise and good." Cheered and invigorated by this communion of mind and similarity of tastes and pursuits, Edith's spirits gradually rose to their own natural pitch, and her eyes beamed and her cheeks glowed with all the animation and more than all the beauty of former days, for it was now beauty matured and embellished by expanded intellect and more exalted feelings.

The time was thus passing pleasantly away, when Lady Waldegrave arrived to take possession of Woodlands for the remainder of the summer. This event was no sooner known to Lady Elizabeth (for she did not even wait till it should be communicated) than she was on the fidgets to go to her daughter, whether for the purpose of embracing or reproaching seemed uncertain—probably both. She accordingly ordered her carriage, without even consulting Dr. Lamotte, and, attended by her dogs, set out to spend the day where she had little reason to flatter herself she would be a welcome guest.

Edith had declined accompanying her, and, having a general invitation to Oakley House, gladly availed herself of her liberty to go and spend the day with her friends there.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ALTHOUGH the distance between Oakley House and the Cottage was in reality short, it was lengthened to a considerable space by the beautiful diversity of the ground which intervened, and to which the walks and drives had been judiciously adapted. Edith could not help contrasting in her own mind, as she walked along, the difference between the sylvan graces of an English home scene, such as this, and the more picturesque beauties of her own Highland domain. At the dear recollection of Glenroy her heart flew back to the loved haunts of its early days ; and the thoughts of the present were all suspended while again she lived over the past. The gay visions of her childhood rose to view ; but they who had formed her felicity then—where were they now ? Ronald, Norman, Reginald ! For each and all of them how many were the bitter tears she had shed ! and what had she reaped from these fair blossoms of life's morning ? Alas ! naught but regret, sorrow, and disappointment !

From contemplations such as these she was roused by coming suddenly in contact with Admiral Conway, as he advanced from an adjacent walk, leaning on the

arm of a gentleman, with whom he appearcd to be in earnest conversation. Conscious that the traces of her emotion must be visible on her countenance, Edith scarcely ventured to raise her eyes, still swimming in tears, and having exchanged salutations would have passed on. But this the Admiral would not permit.

"Come, this is a fortunate encounter," cried he ; "Lady Arabella has half quarrelled with me this morning for depriving her of this gallant convoy," pointing to his friend, "with whom she had intended to figure off to the Cottage ; but I shall make my peace handsomely if I return with such a fair prize. Miss Malcolm, allow me to introduce Mr. Melcombe."

Edith looked up in amazement at the mention of this name, and beheld a young man of noble mien and features, but so pale, and with such visible emotion on his countenance, that she could scarcely refrain from uttering an exclamation of alarm. But the next moment she smiled, to think this must be the unknown friend of Mrs. Macauley, and she at once felt she had wronged him by her suspicions. All this was the conviction of a moment, while the Admiral went on,—

"The similarity of your names is so great that I know not how we are to distinguish them in England, where we don't give the vowels such fair play as you do in Scotland. You must teach me the true pronunciation of your name, Miss Malcolm, that I may not offend its Celtic antiquity by confounding it with our Saxon appellatives."

"England has rid me of some of my Celtic prejudices," said Edith, "and has taught me what I certainly might have known before—that there is nothing in a name beyond the association of ideas we connect with it."

"And the associations," replied he, "are rather in favour of your name, distinguished as it has been in ancient times, as well as in modern days. I am therefore glad that England can lay claim to—to the patronymic of my gallant friend here. Melcombe, what is the matter? are you ill?"

The question brought back more than the glow of health to Mr. Melcombe's face, as he uttered hastily, "Yes—quite—but——"

"But you turn pale at the thoughts of hearing your panegyric proclaimed in a fair lady's ear? Well, depend upon it the deeds of Captain Melcombe would have shone ten thousand times brighter in her eyes and sounded a thousand times sweeter in her ears had they been achieved by a Captain Mocombe or Mak-kum—which is it?"

"Neither," said Edith, smiling; "and you must not flatter yourself you will be able to pronounce a Highland name until you have first breathed our mountain air."

"Well, I hope to do that some day before I die; and that I shall take my first lesson from you on the top of some Highland Parnassus. What say you to joining me in that expedition, Melcombe? I suspect you would find it a more arduous task to haul me up

to the top of Ben Lomond than it was even to hoist the Greek flag over the Turkish crescent?"

"I trust I shall one day be allowed to make the attempt," said Mr. Melcombe.

There was something in the tone of the voice, full, clear, and melodious as it was, which made Edith start, and unconsciously she looked with an inquiring gaze at the speaker. Again the colour mounted almost to his brow as he met her look. An unaccountable feeling of constraint seemed to take possession of him; and although the Admiral continued to talk away without noticing the embarrassment of his companion, he remained nearly silent during the rest of the walk.

"Now, have I not made a good cruise of it?" said the Admiral to his lady, as he presented Edith, who was received, as usual, with open arms. "What more could you have done had you led the expedition yourself, my lady?"

"I could at least have had a little more pleasure, even if I did not presume to claim any of the merit of it," said she, smiling.

"I was sure of that," exclaimed the Admiral, with a triumphant air; "I was sure there would be a but, or an if, or an only, in the case; women never are contented. When you marry, Melcombe, take my advice and marry a real genuine discontented woman at once, and then you know what you are about; but we never know what to do with these laughing hyenas," pointing to Lady Arabella, whose smile was now turned

into a laugh. "They are really very trying to the temper, for there's no knowing when they're in good humour or in bad ; for my part, I'm kept, as you may see, in a constant state of alarm."

"Conscience makes cowards of us all !" Is it not so, Mr. Melcombe ?" said Lady Arabella, gaily.

Again Edith naturally directed her look to the person addressed, and again she was struck with the changing colour and embarrassed expression of his countenance, as, with a forced smile, he was about to reply, when the Admiral interposed : "I see how it is," said he, kindly laying his hand on his shoulder ; "'the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought' at the discussion we were engaged in, and the best cure for that is, to have recourse to our charts and compasses to settle the point; so, come along to the library ;" and, taking his friend's arm, they left the room.

Lady Arabella was silent and thoughtful for a few minutes, and then said, "Pray, may I ask whether you had any previous acquaintance with Mr. Melcombe ?"

"None," replied Edith ; "at least none that I am aware of, though 'tis like a dream to me having seen him before, but when or where I cannot tell." She then recounted to Lady Arabella Mrs. Macauley's adventure, and her own (as it now appeared) groundless suspicion.

Lady Arabella laughed heartily at the idea of his ever having been taken for a highwayman, and said he

had probably been dining with them the evening of Mrs. Macauley's *rencontre*.

"It must have been at Glenroy we met," said Edith, musingly; "and I think I recollect something of his air and features, though I failed to recognise him."

"That is scarcely possible," said Lady Arabella; "his is a countenance that, once seen, could not be soon forgotten."

Edith sighed to think how slight and transient were the impressions the most noble and gifted had made upon her then, when there was but one object on which her thoughts cared to dwell.

"This young man," said Lady Arabella, "is, as you may perceive, a prodigious favourite of the Admiral's, and I may also add, of mine. Besides having been the means of saving the life of my second son at the risk of his own, there is something so prepossessing both in his countenance and manners,—something so open and ingenuous in his whole bearing,—that a much slighter recommendation than Edward's would have inclined us to him. Hitherto we have found him a very delightful companion; but his manner is much changed to-day, or it may be my fancy. Were you struck with anything peculiar?"

"I certainly was," replied Edith, "even at the first moment we met; and now I think I recollect, when a child, a Lady Melcombe spending some days at Glenroy, and having two sons with her. Probably this may be one of them."

"If it were so," said Lady Arabella, "his emotion, poor fellow, might be easily accounted for by the circumstance of his mother having been afterwards divorced."

"Do you know nothing of his family?" inquired Edith.

"Nothing. All that is known of him is, that he was serving on board a merchant ship at the time when it was chased and attacked by pirates. I wish the Admiral were here to explain the affair to you, for I cannot do it justice; but you would have to listen to so much nautical detail, which (like myself) you could not understand, that it is perhaps as well to give my round, unvarnished tale; the substance of which is, that this young man, by his skill, bravery, and resolution, not only was the means of saving the ship, but by his boldness and heroism succeeded in boarding and finally capturing the pirate, laden with rich booty, of which a considerable share was allotted to him. He afterwards fitted out a Greek armed vessel, of which he took the command, and has performed many gallant and even brilliant exploits in the cause; but he was so severely wounded in one engagement that he was obliged to retire from service. His health, however, seems now nearly re-established; but what are his future plans the Admiral and he only know, as I am not of the council. And now I have told you all I can tell of our hero and your highwayman."

And that little was sufficient to make Edith already

feel an interest in one to whom, even in his bright career, some painful or melancholy history seemed attached.

When the Admiral and his young friend returned to the drawing-room, the party had been increased by the arrival of Lord and Lady Ellersley, and one or two chance guests. The conversation, both before and during dinner, became general; and Edith remarked that Mr. Melcombe bore his part in it with an ease and spirit very different from the constrained air and abrupt manner which had marked his first introduction to her. She could not avoid observing, too, that he seemed carefully to shun all occasions of addressing her, or even of rendering those little ordinary attentions which become more marked in the breach than the observance; yet more than once she had caught his eye fixed upon her with an expression of deep undefinable meaning, which confirmed her in her surmises that somehow or other she was associated in his mind with recollections of painful import. Under this impression Edith felt no less distant and embarrassed in her demeanour towards him; and when they separated in the evening, it seemed as if they parted still greater strangers than when they had met.

Edith failed not to make Mrs. Macauley acquainted with this favourable introduction to her friend; and received a delighted and triumphant letter in return, interspersed with reflections in her usual style, and containing various particulars of Johnnie and his

family, who were now in more comfortable circumstances. Johnnie had got payment of a large account; and the children were all better, and Mrs. Macauley, junior, keeping up wonderfully; and so there was great reason to be contented and happy, especially since this fine young man had turned out so well.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

LADY ELIZABETH returned from her visit in great good humour. Lady Waldegrave, she said, had been delighted to see her—had only delayed informing her of her arrival till she had got everything arranged—and was to have driven over for her (that very day), had she not been anticipated by her arrival. To sum up the whole, Florinda had presented her with some of what she called perfect gems of art, but which were, in fact, the mere rubbish of her collection. She was so occupied in admiring and arranging her baubles that Edith learnt little more from her than that Sir Reginald was not at Woodlands ; that Florinda had appeared rather *abattu*, but had promised to take an early opportunity of calling.

The following day, as Edith sat alone in the drawing-room (Lady Elizabeth always spending the mornings in her own dressing-room), a carriage drove up, and presently Lady Waldegrave was announced. Edith started up, and for a moment stood aghast at finding herself thus suddenly confronted with her heartless, treacherous rival. Lady Waldegrave, however, did not appear to notice her agitation ; but ad-

vanced with the most perfect ease, and, embracing her, laid her cheek to hers ; and with her sweetly-modulated voice said, “How happy I am to meet you again, dear Edith !”

Edith could only bow in acknowledgment, and for some moments remained in silent agitation ; but making an effort to regain her composure, she rang the bell, and desired the servant to inform Lady Elizabeth of Lady Waldegrave’s arrival.

“I beg pardon, Edith love,” said her Ladyship, “but the visit is not to mamma, but to you. I was so sorry, love, we could not meet in town ; but it really is impossible to do as one wishes there. And by-the-bye, how much better you look than when I saw you in Scotland. I don’t think the Scotch air at all favourable to beauty, you must know ; but you have made a wonderful escape from Scotch-ness of every kind.” And she sighed as she said it, while she surveyed her with the patronising air of one so gifted in herself that she could afford to bestow approval on another. And certainly Lady Waldegrave’s charms had suffered no diminution, for she looked, if possible, more beautiful and captivating than ever.

“I came early, and alone, because I really wished to see you by yourself, and to explain many things which I am aware must have appeared very strange and unaccountable to you, and which I fear have prejudiced you sadly against me.”

“Excuse me,” said Edith; “but I cannot *now* listen to any explanation ; the facts spoke for themselves at

the time ; that time has been long since passed, and with it all resentment, all regret, on my part.”

“Then, you do forgive whatever may have appeared mysterious and inexplicable in my conduct ?”

“I forgive all who ever injured me,” said Edith, mildly, but emphatically, “as I hope to be forgiven.”

“Dear Edith! you were always kind and generous. But, if I injured you, Heaven knows it was unintentionally ; for, indeed, I ever loved you ; and, I do assure you, it has many times made me quite wretched to think of the cruel estrangement that took place between us.” And her Ladyship put her handkerchief to her eyes. “But for that artful, designing woman, Madame Latour, whom mamma foolishly committed me to, I am sure it never would have happened. Indeed, had I been at all aware that you had the slightest *tendresse* for your cousin——”

“I must again repeat, Lady Waldegrave, that this retrospection is worse than useless—it is painful.”

“Well, then, dearest Edith, let all be forgotten ; and henceforth let us be as friends and sisters.”

“All is forgiven,” said Edith, with emotion. “And in sincere, heartfelt wishes for your happiness, I am your friend—more I cannot say.”

“Then we are reconciled, and you will come and visit me ; indeed, if you are sincere in your wishes for my happiness, you will ; for I cannot possibly be happy while this estrangement lasts. Say, then, you will come to Woodlands—do, dearest love !”

“I cannot promise at present,” said Edith.

"There is one thing I can assure you of," said Lady Waldegrave; "if you have any dislike, any unpleasant feeling, at the thoughts of meeting another person, you need have no scruple on that account, as he is absent."

Edith's cheeks glowed as she said, "I can have nothing to dread in meeting the husband of Lady Waldegrave. But do not urge me further at present." At that moment a message was brought from Lady Elizabeth, desiring to see Lady Waldegrave in her dressing-room.

"Promise me, then, that you remain here till my return, for I have still something to say to you that nearly concerns my own happiness. Surely you will not refuse me that?" And Edith promised to await her return.

Left to herself, she began to reflect more calmly on the part she had to perform. That Florinda should have wished to be reconciled to her, and have even sought to exculpate herself, was natural; but that she should have sought a renewal of intimacy with so much earnestness was more than she had anticipated. Selfish, heartless, and treacherous as she had hitherto appeared, surely this could only proceed from a good motive. For in what could she, poor and dependent as she now was, benefit the gay, prosperous Lady Waldegrave? Perhaps she was entitled to the allowance she claimed, from the weak and evil counsellors who had been the guides of her youth; and if, even after all, she was not happy—as she feared she was

not—might she not even yet prove of service to her, and should she allow any wayward feelings of her own to stand in the way of such a duty? The result of Edith's deliberations was, that, in accordance with those divine precepts by which she professed to be guided, she would sacrifice her feelings even for those who had sacrificed her happiness to their own.

Lady Waldegrave's visit to her mother was not of long duration. When she returned, she said, "I have just settled with mamma that she is to come and dine quietly at Woodlands to-morrow, and stay all night; now, let me beg, dearest Edith, that you will gratify me by accompanying her. It will be charity to me in every way, for I do assure you nothing can be more *triste* than I am at present. You won't meet a soul, but two very charming girls, Lady Harriet and Lady Maria Bingly, and I shall be better able to open my heart to you, and to ask your advice. But who is this?" cried she, as she cast a glance towards the window. Then suddenly starting up, she exclaimed, "Lady Arabella Conway! the very best of good, dull women—I must make my escape. But who is it that accompanies her? What a very fine-looking man! I surely have seen him somewhere in town." Edith named Mr. Melcombe, as she also caught a glimpse of Lady Arabella and him approaching. "He is very handsome, and will be the greatest acquisition to my *corps dramatique*, for you must know I intend to have private theatricals; but, pray, don't

breathe a syllable of it to mamma, or she will want to take a part. Now, pray, present him to me."

The entrance of Lady Arabella and her *protégé* here stopped all farther comment.

After the usual inquiries had been made, and Mr. Melcombe had been presented to Lady Waldegrave, she said, with all her fascinating but artificial sweetness, "I fear we are not entitled to rank Mr. Melcombe in our wild clan; fortunately for himself, he belongs to a more civilised community."

Mr. Melcombe slightly bowed, and coloured as he replied, "I was not aware it was more fortunate to have been born an English than a Scotchman, since both are alike Britons. But," he added, with a still deepening hue, "the sea is the only country to which I lay claim."

"What would Sir Reginald say to that compliment of yours, Lady Waldegrave?" inquired Lady Arabella.

"Sir Reginald is already aware of my sentiments on the subject," said Lady Waldegrave carelessly; "he knows that I prefer England to Scotland in all things, and only love it less than France and Italy. How grave Edith looks at this declaration! Do you remember how shocked you were at Glenroy, when I ventured to whisper that I preferred myrtle to heather? I am sure you expected some of your dark brown mountains to fall upon me—did you not?"

"I hope I did not carry my *amor patriæ* quite so far," said Edith. And she could not repress a sigh as

she added, "But we are naturally hurt when we hear the objects of our affection lightly spoken of by others."

"Especially, as you know 'tis said, the uglier the object the more intensely and unreasonably we love it," said Lady Waldegrave, laughing.

"Mere beauty certainly does not long retain its influence on the affections," said Mr. Melcombe.

"So it has been said, but I very much doubt the truth of the assertion," replied Lady Waldegrave, with a slight shade of displeasure on her countenance ; "at least I have never heard any good reason why it should not." And she surveyed herself in an opposite mirror with an air of haughty satisfaction.

"I am no metaphysician," said Mr. Melcombe, "so I cannot pretend to enter into the subtleties of the question ; but it is easy to conceive that the influence of the mind must be much more permanent than that of the senses."

"Constancy," said Lady Arabella, "is one of those good, old-fashioned, moral virtues which is no longer *à la mode* ; we rarely hear of such a thing now-a-days."

"It surely does not deserve the name of inconstancy when we withdraw our affections from an undeserving object—does it, Edith?" said Lady Waldegrave.

Edith was shocked at what she felt was implied in these words, and for a minute or two was unable to reply. When she raised her eyes she encountered

those of Mr. Melcombe fixed upon her with an expression of the deepest interest. But the serenity of her countenance returned, and she replied, "Everything must depend upon circumstances; in some cases it must be a duty to renounce a misplaced attachment—in others, to adhere to it."

"I am not such a casuist as you," said Lady Waldegrave carelessly, "for I really cannot perceive the difference; but how in the world has a passing remark on the respective beauties of heath and myrtle turned into a lackadaisical discussion on the duties of constancy? I really must have something to sweeten my imagination after it. Pray, Mr. Melcombe, have the goodness to fetch me a bit of something very fragrant from the conservatory."

"You could scarcely find one worse qualified to execute your commands," said he; "for my botanical lore is almost confined to sea-weed. I am so utterly ignorant, I fear I may commit some unpardonable solecism in good taste, if not in good breeding, by my selection."

"Well, to render your offence less glaring," said Lady Arabella, "you shall bring something for each and all of us."

"What! and so run the risk of offending three ladies instead of one? And am I to have no reward if I should succeed in pleasing all or any of you?"

"Mr. Melcombe is the very last person from whom I should have expected mercenary stipulations of any sort," said Lady Arabella; "but it proves the old and

homely saying to be a true one, that every man has his price. May I ask what yours is upon the present occasion?"

"My reward shall be discretionary," said he, with a smile, "and anything given with goodwill will be acceptable;" and he stepped into the conservatory.

"That is rather an odd person," said Lady Waldegrave; "his manner, though somewhat *brusque*, is *piquant*, and he certainly is very handsome, and I must say distinguished looking. My maid said to me yesterday she was sure my Ladyship would approve of my new groom of the chambers, for that he had *l'air distingué*; after that I cannot think of bestowing it upon Mr. Melcombe."

In a few minutes he returned with a handful of flowers.

"I wish I were as versed in their various significations as Ophelia was, that I might make my offerings appropriate. There is geranium for your Ladyship," said he to Lady Arabella; "but of what it is emblematic I must declare myself ignorant."

"—— genteel geranium,
With a leaf for all that comes,"

said she, as she plucked one and gave it to him; "that, and a thank you, is all I can bestow."

Mr. Melcombe then presented some slips of myrtle to Lady Waldegrave, and said, "As your Ladyship has declared your preference, I have been spared a choice." And without waiting for an acknowledgment he turned to Edith, and offered her two sprigs of heath.

"I wish they had been Highland heather instead of foreign heath," said he, "for then you would have prized them more."

"But with all my national prejudice, I could not have admired them so much," said she, as she took the brilliant exotics.

"But you would perhaps have rewarded me better," said he, forcing a laugh to hide his embarrassment.

"What a reproach for my churlishness," said Edith, as she returned him one of the sprigs, but she coloured at the pleasure that beamed in his eyes as he received the trifling gift. Lady Waldegrave never could endure that another should engage attention while she was present. Unaccustomed to meet with neglect, on the present occasion she mistook it for shyness; and self-love whispered to her that the handsome, unknown stranger was only dazzled by her charms and distinction into distance and reserve. She therefore, in her sweetest and most winning manner, called him to her on some frivolous pretext, and contrived to detain him in exclusive conversation till Lady Arabella rose to take leave. She then said, "I flatter myself, Lady Arabella, we shall meet very often while we are such near neighbours; and that I shall also have the pleasure of seeing Admiral Conway and Mr. Melcombe at Woodlands."

Mr. Melcombe acknowledged the compliment by a bow, and the visitors severally departed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

IT was not without some violence to her feelings that Edith went to testify her reconciliation with Lady Waldegrave, by visiting her in her own house; but she repressed these indications of feelings not yet wholly subdued; and calmly, meekly resigned herself to the duty required. If she had admired Woodlands on a first survey, it appeared to still greater advantage now, when nature and art seemed to have been taxed to their utmost to give the last finish to its charms; and all around breathed only of the refinement of luxury and pleasure. To those who could believe in the happiness caused by external circumstances, this would have seemed a very paradise.

Lady Waldegrave received her guests in the most kind, caressing manner; and having provided a lively old French marquis as an escort for Lady Elizabeth, she consigned them to the care of each other; and thus happily rid of her, she directed her whole attention to Edith, whom she introduced to her friends, Ladies Harriet and Maria Bingly, as her dear and only sister; and she brought her child to kiss and welcome his pretty aunt to Woodlands. Then she must show Edith everything herself, and have her

opinion about many things ; and Edith was led from drawing-room to drawing-room, and from boudoirs to conservatories and aviaries ; and there was so much to look at, and praise and admire, that it was impossible to enjoy. There were pictures and marbles, and china and cabinets, and tables and vases, each and any of which would have been a study for a day ; but which were yet too various and numerous to be duly appreciated on a first survey. Tradespeople were still employed in some of the rooms arranging the varied treasures of art, which were designed to form one exquisite and entire collection.

“ All this, you may suppose, has not been done for nothing,” said Lady Waldegrave, as they ended the hurried and imperfect examination, and she threw herself on a couch in her dressing-room ; “ and indeed I am almost frightened when I think how much it has cost. Then we were so cheated at first, and bought such rubbish at such enormous prices ; but that is the case with everybody at first. One must pay for a knowledge of the arts, as well as for knowledge of every kind ; and at any rate, it is surely better that money should be spent upon fine pictures and marbles than on the turf or at the gaming-table.” Edith was hurt at this indirect attack upon her husband, and thought how different must be the perception even of *taste* in the material from what it was in the moral world, when a wife could thus seek to excuse her own extravagance by proclaiming her husband’s errors. Lady Waldegrave went on : “ But the great work I

have now in hand—for there is no living in the country without occupation—is a pretty little theatre. I have been remodelling—in fact I may say building; it was originally a pavilion or a banqueting-room, or some of these stupid, senseless, antiquated things, which one's ancestors deformed their grounds with. I have had it turned into something both useful and ornamental; and I intend to open it on Dudley's birthday with a French play and ballet, in which you, dear Edith, will take a part. Don't say you won't, for you positively *must*. But although I have gone to work as economically as possible, and had plans and estimates, and all those sort of things, sent to me, yet it has grown into something expensive too; not that I should grudge it at all, as it will be such a source of amusement to myself and friends, besides having given employment to poor people; in short, it is a thing calculated (in my opinion) to do good. But in the meantime I am persecuted to death for money by the man who undertook the thing; although he must know that of course he will be paid, yet he is for ever boring me with his bills."

"But he only asks his own," said Edith; "poor people cannot work without wages. How are they to support themselves and their families?"

"Oh, there are a thousand ways of managing that; and there is nobody so poor that cannot get credit somewhere."

"But how ruinous for the poor to contract debt, if even they could."

"As to that, it can be no worse for the poor than for the rich."

"It is bad for both," said Edith ; "but the poor are most to be pitied when their sufferings are occasioned by the thoughtlessness and extravagance of the great."

"Oh, certainly, it is very wrong in people not to pay their bills when they can do it."

"Can do it!" exclaimed Edith ; "why should people ever have bills that they cannot pay? Surely that is robbery of the worst description."

"Why, there are many things that people in a certain station must have ; and if they happen not to have the money just at the moment to pay them, where is the harm of having a bill?"

"None, if they are sure of having the money to discharge them ; otherwise it is contracting debt."

"Well, there is no harm in that, I hope ? else you will think me very wicked ; for, to tell the truth, I am over head and ears in debt, and at this moment do not know where to get even a few guineas !" This was said with affected levity, and Edith could only utter an exclamation of surprise and consternation.

"The fact is," continued her Ladyship, speaking with great rapidity, "I have been very unfortunate. First of all, my fortune was not what it was said to be, by several thousands a year ; then, when I married,"—here she heaved a sigh—"I was quite ignorant of the value of money, and of course spent a great deal ; then, Sir Reginald has never chosen

to give himself any trouble in the management of our establishment, and I can't do it ; so we have had horrid people, who cheated us on all hands ; and you may imagine how that was, with three establishments to keep up—Waldegrave Abbey, my town residence (both of which, by-the-bye, I greatly improved and entirely new furnished), and this ; besides those Highland places, which I am told are very expensive also. To complete the whole, at the time of my marriage I made an enormous settlement upon mamma, quite out of all proportion to my income ; you will scarcely believe that she actually draws very near three thousand a year from me ! It is much more, I do assure you, than I can afford, or she can have the slightest occasion for."

"Surely there must be some mistake on one side or other," said Edith, "for Lady Elizabeth complains of being very much straitened in her circumstances."

"Yes, she is always complaining," said Lady Waldegrave carelessly, "but I assure you it is the case. With her jointure from the Glenroy estate, and what I allow her besides, she has above three thousand a year—a monstrous sum for her ! She certainly must either be saving money, or she is pillaged by the people about her in a scandalous manner. I ventured to hint that to her some time ago, but she was quite angry, so I have never entered on the subject again ; but if the thing was placed before her in a proper light (and I know no one who could do it so well as yourself, Edith, love), I am sure she would see

the propriety of giving up at least one thousand a year."

Edith was unable to articulate a word, so much was she struck by this extraordinary communication. Lady Waldegrave took no notice of her silence, but went on : "I should be ready to make any sacrifice myself consistent with what I owe to my rank and station, but I don't see how I *can* do it. I might, to be sure, part with a few servants and horses, perhaps ; but that would make very little difference ; a few hundreds a year, more or less, is really not worth breaking up one's establishment for."

"But if you were to begin, it is more than probable Sir Reginald would follow your example."

"But it is not with *me* the retrenchment ought to begin."

"Whether or not, you might at least make trial of it."

"And, in other words, make myself wretched and uncomfortable ; and give up my own innocent gratifications that he may have more money to squander in all sorts of horrid ways ; besides, I am certain I only spend what I have a right to."

"And what does Sir Reginald say ?" inquired Edith fearfully.

"Oh, as to Sir Reginald," replied Lady Waldegrave contemptuously, "he is the last person I should think of consulting ; the man who spends his life between Crockford's and Newmarket, you may guess, is no very wise counsellor, and is not likely to extri-

cate me from my difficulties. But what is the matter ? are you ill ? ”

“ Oh, Florinda, how shocked I am at all you tell me ! ” exclaimed Edith, bursting into tears. “ How dreadful to be living in such a state ! wronging the poor, deceiving and ruining your husband ! Seeking to deprive your mother of what is due to her—neglectful of what God requires of you. Ah, Florinda ! how can you barter your happiness and the happiness of others for such toys as these ? ”

“ Really, Edith, you talk in a most extraordinary manner ! ” said Lady Waldegrave, in great displeasure. “ Any one who heard you would suppose I had committed every crime under the sun ! Instead of which, the sole amount of my wickedness consists simply in being rather in want of a little money, that’s all ; and as for Sir Reginald, he must know how I am teased for money ; for we have several times been threatened with an execution in the house by some of those horrid people.”

“ Oh, Florinda ! forgive me, if I have spoken too severely,” said Edith, in deep emotion ; “ but—— ”

“ Oh, I am very forgiving,” said Lady Waldegrave coldly, “ and very charitable too, for I really don’t believe you meant the cruel things you said ; and if they had been addressed to Sir Reginald, they would have been very applicable ; the sums he has lost at play are enormous ; I know that from the best authority ; and also that at the last Newmarket Meeting he threw away upwards of thirty thousand

pounds upon foolish bets on a favourite horse ; so I have little to reproach myself with in comparison of that ! Indeed, I only do as the rest of the world does ; but I am sure I have bored you to death with my annoyances, so come let us return to the drawing-room, and do try what you can do for me with mamma ; I fear she will be quite angry at me for having monopolised you so long—she is so fond of you ! I do think you have more to say with her, and could, if you chose, manage her better than anybody in the world ; but there is the dressing-bell—will you have one of my maids to assist you ? But you need not be very *recherché* in your *toilette*, as I expect no company, and indeed I am not in spirits for company at present. Fanchon, show Miss Malcolm to her apartment.”

CHAPTER XXXV.

WHEN Lady Waldegrave joined the party, the brilliancy of her appearance but little accorded with the account of her pecuniary difficulties ; and even Lady Elizabeth exclaimed, somewhat spitefully, “Why, Florinda, you dress in your country house as though you held a court !”

“ You must scold Mademoiselle Fanchon then, mamma,” said Lady Waldegrave carelessly, “ as I submitted myself entirely to her discretion to-day. Dress, I assure you, was least in my thoughts.”

In spite of the flattering introduction of Edith to the Ladies Bingly, they seemed to regard even the dear and only sister of Lady Waldegrave with somewhat of suspicious distance ; for they were mere elegant automatons, fearful of committing themselves by anything approaching to familiarity with one who dressed indifferently, according to their estimation, and who had never been at D—— House, and who, of course, had none of the current phrases of the day. Edith was too meek and gentle to resent the sort of repressed ill-breeding (how different from native politeness !) of such manners ; she felt only pity for those whose minds had been thus cramped and

fettered by the bondage of their own little sphere, falsely called the great world.

The same magnificence pervaded every part of the establishment ; everything was perfect in its style, and yet how little enjoyment there seemed in the midst of it all ! Lady Waldegrave wore an air of languor and discontent ; the two ladies lacked *beaux*, and were dull and vapid ; Edith was depressed by what she had heard, as contrasted with what she saw ; and the only two who seemed to enter into the pleasures of the table were Lady Elizabeth and the old Marquis Dubocage, who ate like pigeons, and chatted like magpies.

Dinner was over, and the dessert had been placed on the table, when a carriage was heard driving round to the entrance ; the dogs barked—the bell rang—voices were heard in the hall.

“Who is that ?” inquired Lady Waldegrave.

“Sir Reginald and Mr. Harris, my Lady,” was the reply.

“Sir Reginald !” exclaimed she, with more of surprise than pleasure ; “and that odious Mr. Harris ! Have they dined ?”

“Sir Reginald has ordered dinner in the library, my Lady.”

Lady Waldegrave coloured, but said, “We are obliged to him, at least, for sparing us a renewal of even Fricourt’s ambrosial cates, which certainly would not be improved by a seasoning of Newmarket dust, especially as it never is gold dust.”

To Edith the sensation was strange and painful ; but a few steps were between her and Reginald—Reginald, once the beloved, the betrothed of her heart, the arbiter of her destiny. Reginald, the faithless, the forsaken, the husband of another ! And all the sad and solemn scenes that had passed between them rose to her view. She shuddered, and for a moment felt almost overpowered by the conflict of long dormant feelings, suddenly awoke to painful consciousness.

“ How I dislike these abrupt arrivals,” said Lady Elizabeth, in an ill-natured tone ; “ they always do flurry one’s nerves. I see it has the same effect upon you, my dear,” to Edith.

“ If there is to be anything of a *scène*,” said Lady Waldegrave sarcastically, “ we had best return to the drawing-room ; we shall at least have the benefit of eau-de-Cologne and couches there.”

Edith felt the taunt, and the colour returned to her cheeks with a deepened glow. At that moment the little boy entered, and came running up to his mamma.

“ Do you know, mamma, that papa is come ? ”

“ Yes, love ; have you seen him ? ”

“ Yes, mamma ; but I don’t love him to-day.”

“ Why so, my darling ? ”

“ Because he bade me go away, and not tease him.”

“ What a kind good papa you have got, Dudley,” said her Ladyship ; “ is he not ? ”

“ He is very good sometimes ; for you know,

mamma, he sent me such a pretty little phaeton from town, and two ponies *so small!*" and he clasped his hands in admiration.

"Don't lean upon me so, Dudley," cried her Ladyship, in a tone of displeasure, "and see how you have dropped your grapes! How tiresome children are! Now, go, my love, 'tis very late—time you were in bed. We are going to have coffee. Good night, my sweetest;" and with a kiss the child was dismissed, as the ladies and their old beau returned to the drawing-room. The evening passed heavily along. Lady Elizabeth and her Marquis played at *écarté*. Lady Waldegrave and her friends played and sang, and talked of operas, and turned over new music, and Edith sat apart trying to read, but unable to turn her thoughts from the strange anomalous scenes that surrounded her. To the senses all was light and beauty and fragrance and melody; but oh, the evil passions, the moral degradation, which lay hid beneath the specious show! Her train of reflections was suddenly broken by the entrance of Sir Reginald and his friend. He accosted Lady Waldegrave with a careless "How do you do?" as he merely touched her hand, and bowed slightly to the rest of the company without observing Edith, whose head rested on her hand as she still bent over her book.

"Pretty well," replied Lady Waldegrave, with a disdainful coolness. "Perhaps I ought to rise, and make my best curtsy for the kind inquiry, tardy as it is."

Sir Reginald turned on his heel, and as he did so his eye fell on Edith. He started, and for a moment stood transfixed to the spot, then, darting forward, he exclaimed, "Edith!" and seizing her hand, he held it in both of his, and gazed on her with looks expressive of surprise and delight. But far different feelings were Edith's. Surprised indeed she was; but still more was she shocked at beholding the ravages a few short years had wrought on the person of Sir Reginald. How different from the Reginald she had once fondly loved! Lit up as his countenance was with the expression of pleasure, its habitual cast had stamped its character on every feature. All were sharpened and contracted as by strong excitement and violent passions; and his flushed cheek, haggard eyes, and reckless air, told a tale from which Edith turned shuddering away. But Sir Reginald had evidently drunk enough of champagne to make him either insensible of, or indifferent to, the nicer shades of feeling. He seated himself by her, and continued to gaze upon her with looks of admiration.

"How glad I am to see you, Edith," said he, taking her hand, "and to see you here! I hadn't an idea you were even in England!"

Edith answered as calmly and briefly as she could that she had been residing for some time with her maternal aunt.

"But you have left her now, I hope, and are come to us?"

"I at present reside with Lady Elizabeth."

"With Lady Elizabeth!" repeated Reginald contemptuously; "that is no home for you, Edith. You must remain with us; you must indeed. But you look well and happy," said he, gazing intently upon her. "You have grown handsomer than ever you were. I should scarcely have known you!"

There was something in the manner as well as in the matter which offended Edith's feelings. True, there was still a grace and refinement in the mien and air, remote from the coarse familiarity of vulgar life and manners. But how much of moral deformity may be veiled beneath the mask of worldly refinement! Edith would have risen to join the rest of the party, but Sir Reginald would not permit her.

"Why should you wish to leave me?" he said, again seizing her hand. "Surely, after so long a separation, cousins might have something to say to each other. It was not so we used to meet! Ah, Edith! surely you have not quite lost all interest in me?" He spoke with a kind of melancholy earnestness that affected Edith, and she looked upon him more in sorrow than in anger.

"No," said she, "indeed I have not. I feel sincerely interested in all that concerns Lady Waldegrave and your little boy."

Sir Reginald sighed. "You were always an angel, Edith; and I——. Now don't go. I will talk to you of anything—of my boy. You say you take an interest in him! There is something, then, we are both interested in—perhaps the only thing."

At that moment Lady Waldegrave called, in a sarcastic tone, while she touched the harp, "As your success on the turf is always a matter of certainty, Sir Reginald, I am prepared to celebrate it with an *Io Pæan*, as soon as you think proper to announce your victories; or, perhaps, Miss Malcolm is to come forward as chorus and proclaim your triumphs?"

Sir Reginald's brow contracted, and his eyes flashed fire at this insulting speech. "Miss Malcolm knows enough of my history to know it is one which affords no matter of exultation," he said bitterly.

Edith felt the taunt, and it raised a momentary glow on her cheek; but she only answered it by looking calmly at Lady Waldegrave, whose eyes sank beneath the mild rebuke; and, colouring with shame and resentment, she swept her fingers across the harp, and, calling to Lady Harriet to join her, they commenced.

Edith rose, and drew close to the table where Lady Elizabeth sat. Sir Reginald, after standing for a few minutes with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon her, suddenly started from his reverie. "Come, Harris," he said, "let us have a game at billiards;" and quitting the apartment, Mr. Harris, who was lounging over a newspaper, rose and followed.

Edith was glad when the evening was ended, and only wished her visit was also brought to a termination. Lady Waldegrave and she parted for the night with mutual coldness and constraint.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

WHEN the party met at a late breakfast the following morning, Sir Reginald's brow wore a still deeper gloom, and Lady Waldegrave seemed inclined to be no less peevish and sarcastic than on the preceding evening. The two ladies maintained their chilling reserve, and though Mr. Harris talked, his conversation was addressed to Sir Reginald, and related solely to the turf.

Edith felt the painfulness of her situation, for although Sir Reginald's manner was less *empressé* than it had been at their first meeting, yet he still singled her out as the only person to whom he paid the slightest attention. Such was the state of the party, when a servant entered to say that a Mr. and Mrs. McDow begged leave to wait upon Sir Reginald and Lady Waldegrave. Sir Reginald repeated the name in surprise, and he looked at Edith as for an explanation, but she could give none.

“Some of Sir Reginald’s Highland friends,” said Lady Waldegrave; “I can have no acquaintance with them; you had therefore better receive your own guests in another room.”

"Any one who comes from Glenroy is welcome," said Sir Reginald, as if stung to contradict even his own feelings ; "show Mr. and Mrs. M'Dow in."

Straightway, preceded by the groom of the chambers, entered Mr. and Mrs. M'Dow, leading between them their eldest born, a great uncouth-looking child. Mr. M'Dow had evidently been in the hands of a London tailor, but to little purpose, for not all the leather and prunella of London could remodel Mr. M'Dow. No cost seemed to have been spared in the attiring of his lady, who was decked out in a most brilliant pelisse and bonnet in the extreme of the fashion. Miss M'Dow was arrayed in a similar costume, and, like her mother, was standing out with finery.

"How do you do, Mr. M'Dow ?" said Sir Reginald, rising and shaking hands with him heartily, as if determined to carry off matters boldly. "Mrs. M'Dow, Lady Waldegrave," waving his hand ; "pray sit down. You are in very good time for breakfast."

"You are extremely obliging, Sir Reginald," said Mr. M'Dow ; "in fact this is our second meal, for we breakfasted before we set out. However, I daresay we are all pretty well appetised again. But is it possible I see Miss Malcolm here ?" for the first time perceiving Edith. "I'm amazed and delighted to see you here," and stalking up to her he shook her vehemently by the hand ; "this is just as it should be ! and how amazingly well you look !"

"Here is a chair for you, Mr. M'Dow," called Sir Reginald, pointing to one next himself.

"You are extremely polite, Sir Reginald." Then addressing Lady Waldegrave, "I need scarcely ask how your Ladyship has been since I had the honour of seeing you at Glenroy?" A slight haughty bend of the head was the only answer vouchsafed, and, nothing daunted, Mr. M'Dow resumed, in a still more insinuating manner, "I hope we have not taken too great a freedom in bringing our little Missy with us, but she can behave herself like a lady when she chooses. Mrs. M'Dow, I think you had better take off her bonnet and pelisse; she'll be cooler without them."

Here Miss M'Dow was disengaged of her pelisse and bonnet, and exhibited a coarse, blubber-lipped, sun-burnt visage, with staring sea-green eyes, a quantity of rough sandy hair, and mulatto neck, with merely a rim of white above the shoulders.

"I think she would be better wanting her gloves too," said Mr. M'Dow, anxious to display as much as possible of the beauties of his offspring. The gloves were now taken off, and a pair of thick mulberry paws set at liberty.

"Now you must not touch anything, Mysie," whispered Mrs. M'Dow, as Mysie prepared to lay hands on a *Sèvre* cup and saucer.

"You had better send her over to me," said Mr. M'Dow, "and I'll keep her in order."

"She'll be very good with me, Mr. M'Dow," replied the lady, in a brisk provincial accent, and with a strong arm hauling up Miss Mysie, planted her upon her knee. She then poured out tea from her own cup

for her, which was sucked in with an avidity that threatened to carry the saucer along with it.

"She is very dry!" said Mrs. M'Dow, in a manner as if she thought it of importance.

"She seems really very thirsty, poor wifey," said Mr. M'Dow, in a similar tone; "but the day is uncommonly warm, and we met a great deal of dust on the road; it was an amazing relief to enter your policy. This is a most beautiful place of yours, Sir Reginald, and a most elegant and shoooperb house! You'll think little of Glenroy after this?"

"A mere *cit's* box," said Sir Reginald contemptuously.

"A *ceet's* box, Sir Reginald! it's a perfect palace; I don't know that ever I say anything so shoooperb! and there's so much taste in the grounds, and everything in such high order. Mrs. M'Dow was prodigiously struck with the grandeur of the flowers, and I was amazingly diverted with our little Missy's remark: 'Fawther,' says she, 'this is a far finer gaarden than yours, but there's no berry-bushes in't'—hoch, hoch, ho! Altogether it's really a perfect paradise!"

Edith's native politeness prevailed over her feelings, and seeing Mrs. M'Dow had no chance of being noticed by the other ladies present, she addressed a few words to her, and received such answers as might be expected from a commonplace, vulgar woman, full of the egotism of her own concerns.

"I hope we are to be favoured with a sight of your young folks, Sir Reginald," said Mr. M'Dow.

"I have only one spoilt little fellow," replied he, "but you shall see him." And he ordered one of the servants to fetch him.

"This is his walking hour," said Lady Waldegrave, with a look of displeasure.

"Only one!" exclaimed Mr. McDow; "here am I with no less than four—two girls and two boys. But here comes your young gentleman. Come away, sir," in his most conciliating tone; "will you shake hands with me?" But the child looked doubtfully at him. "Then will you go and speak to that lady?" pointing to Mrs. McDow.

"No; mamma does not choose me to speak to people I don't know."

"Ay! but would you not like to kiss that pretty little missy there?"

"Oh no, not at all; mamma does not allow me to kiss anybody, and I would not kiss her, she is so ugly."

Mr. and Mrs. McDow both turned very red at this insult to the charms of their daughter, while Lady Waldegrave, with a smile, called, "You may now go to your walk, love; you have done very well."

But Sir Reginald, catching him up in his arms, said, with affected anger, "You are a saucy little dog, and I must send you to Scotland to make a Highland laird of you."

Lady Waldegrave shuddered, and in a low voice exclaimed, "Heaven forbid!"

But I won't be a Scotch laird," replied the young

master ; "for my mamma says I am to be a British Peer, and that is much better."

"Ay!" exclaimed Mr. M'Dow, "you are really very nice; you'll not be a good Highland laird, and you'll not shake hands with me, and you'll not speak to my wife, and you'll not kiss my daughter! Will you tell me your name, then?"

"Oh yes; papa calls me Reginald, mamma calls me Dudley; but my real name is Reginald Dudley Waldegrave Malcolm."

"That's a very grand name! I have a little boy of my own, who has a good long name; but it's nothing like yours."

"What is your little boy called?" inquired Master Reginald Dudley.

"Donald M'Craw M'Dow is his name."

"And is she called Donald M'Craw, too?" demanded Master Dudley, pointing to Miss M'Dow, as she stood gazing at him in vulgar amazement, her clumsy shapeless figure and broad plebeian face contrasting themselves with the elegant graceful form and high delicate features of the young patrician.

"No, no—Donald's not a lady's name. She's called Marjory Muckle M'Dow. But if you beat my boy in a name, I think he would have the best of it in a fight; he would make two of you, I can tell you. Don't you think so, my dear?" to his lady.

"Oh yes; our Donald's much stouter; I think Sandy is more of his make. But Patsy's the smallest of our children."

"She's very spirity, though!" said Mr. M'Dow in a tone of admiration.

"Yes, yes—she'll keep her own," responded his lady. "Does not Patsy sometimes get the better of Donald and you, Mysie?"

Here Miss M'Dow, who had been playing with one of the beautiful *Sèvre* plates, let it fall, and it was broken to pieces.

"I hope she hasn't cut herself?" cried Mr. M'Dow in a voice of tender alarm.

Lady Waldegrave hastily rose, and the rest of the ladies were following her example, when Mr. M'Dow said, "I'm extremely anxious, Miss Malcolm, if it's not asking too great a favour, that you would remain a little with Mrs. M'Dow and me, while I communicate with Sir Reginald on the business that has brought me up at this time. It will soon be no secret, so it's just as well to speak out at once; and I always like to have the ladies on my side."

"But even if I were to be on your side, Mr. M'Dow, I am very sure I can be of no service to you," said Edith, moving away, while Mrs. M'Dow sat like a rock.

"At all events, I would take it extremely kind if you do me the favour to hear me tell my own story, as there will no doubt be many false statements made on the occasion; indeed, it has excited a great deal of animadversion already, I understand."

"Many people think I have influenced Mr. M'Dow," said Mrs. M'Dow, with great warmth and importance

of manner. "But I am sure that was not the case, for, with Mr. M'Dow's abilities, he needs nobody to direct him, I am sure." This was uttered in the peremptory manner of one who was well accustomed to lay down the law at home.

"Yes—yes; Mrs. M'Dow has come in for her share of what has been going; but, luckily, she's above minding those sort of clashes. No doubt some of them have found their way to London by this time?"

"I am quite ignorant to what you allude, Mr. M'Dow," said Sir Reginald, now heartily sick of his guests. "If it is any matter of business, I beg you will apply to my law-agents—they understand these things much better than I do. Besides, I am sorry a particular engagement calls me to town this morning." Mr. M'Dow looked very blank at this information.

"So, you're going up to London this forenoon? I understood you had been settled here for the summer. But, however, I shall not detain you many minutes, Sir Reginald; a very few words will let you into the whole mystery." Then taking a long pinch of snuff and clearing his throat, he began,—

"As you, Sir Reginald and Miss Malcolm, have both had opportunities of judging for yourselves of my ministry, I shall not detain you by offering any explanation of my views on that head. All I shall say is this: that I have acted throughout most conscientiously, and no man can do more."

Mr. M'Dow paused, as if expecting a burst of

applause to follow, but Sir Reginald was chafing with impatience ; and Edith could only sigh to hear a man boast of his conscience while it was yet in such a darkened state.

"It would be well if everybody's conscience was like yours, Mr. M'Dow," said his lady warmly.

"It would be well if every one's conscience were enlightened by the Word of God," said Edith mildly.

"I am sure that's true!" said Mrs. M'Dow, taking the remark as a compliment.

"I can only impute the ill-will with which I have been visited as proceeding almost entirely from ignorance," said Mr. M'Dow, with affected meekness.

"There's more than that, Mr. M'Dow," said his lady, with a toss of her head.

"Well, well, my dear," said Mr. M'Dow, in a by-way of soothing manner, "whatever it is, I bear them no ill-will, I'm sure." Sir Reginald here pulled out his watch. "But not to detain you, Sir Reginald, I shall come to the point at once. The short and the long of the matter is this : I find my situation by no means so pleasant as it ought to be. The neighbourhood is sadly fallen off ; since the death of my respected friend Glenroy it has never been the same place to me.—(Mrs. M'Dow, will you take Missy's hands out of the jeellie ?)—Then a mischievous spirit has got in amongst the people ; they are not satisfied with my ministry ; they cry out that I don't preach the gospel, and a great deal of nonsense of that kind ; insomuch that the very last time I preached there

were just seven people in the church, besides my own family and the precentor!"

"It's very true," said Mrs. M'Dow, with inflamed cheeks; "but a great deal of the mischief is owing to Mrs. M'Taig; for Miss M'Tavish told me——"

"Whisht—whisht, Colly, my dear; it's not worth our while to mind what she said; the woman's a perfect enthusiast; but indeed they are all tarred with the same stick.—(Oh, my lamb, you mustn't drink out of the cream jug.)—However, as I was saying, Sir Reginald, it's not pleasant for a minister to be on such terms with his people, especially situated as we are at such a distance from genteel society; and I feel that even more upon Mrs. M'Dow's account than my own, for she has always been used to a good deal of genteel company; and it's what she had a title to expect when she married me; for, like yourself, Sir Reginald, I was so fortunate as to be honoured by being the choice of a lady with a pretty considerable independence of her own, and of course she is entitled to more at my hands than if she had brought nothing along with her."

Sir Reginald here rose, and rang the bell violently.
"Why is my carriage not ready?"

"I don't know, sir."

"Then inquire, and desire it to be brought immediately."

"Well, Sir Reginald, since you're in a hurry I'll not detain you many minutes. You understand how matters are situated between me and my people,

and you may conceive how little satisfaction I can consequently have in the exercise of my ministry; that, together with the consideration due to Mrs. McDow and my family, have made me entertain serious thoughts of throwing up my situation altogether."

"That's just what they want! I know Mrs. M'Taig said to Mrs. M'Kaig, before Miss M'Tavish, that she hoped to skail the dooket yet—for that's what they call the manse—that set!" and Mrs. McDow waxed hotter and hotter.

"Oh, she's a vulgar, ill-tongued woman, my dear, and we should be above minding her," said Mr. McDow, with much majesty. "Now, as I was statting to you, Sir Reginald—my dear, will you take care that Mysie does no mischief," as the coarse paws were seen perambulating over the table as far as the thick blue arms would extend—"my wish is to withdraw myself from my present situation altogether. (Our little Missy's really taking a good look of you, Sir Reginald. Will you go to that gentleman's knee, my lambie? Oh, you're for *papaw's*. Then come away.) At the same time, although the stipend is small, it is always something, and I should not like to throw it up unless I had something else secured to me. Now, I have lately learnt that there is a prospect of two professorships becoming vacant at no very remote period, either of which would suit me extremely well, and I think I'm fully qualified to discharge the duties of either: the one is the Humanity Class, the other is

that of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. If you would favour me with your interest on the occasion, I have little doubt but that, together with my testimonials and recommendations from other quarters, would ensure my appointment to one or other of these chairs."

"And I thought you was to speak about being made chaplain to the king too, Mr. M'Dow," said his lady briskly.

"Why, that's not so material a point at present, as I don't find there's any immediate prospect of a vacancy there. At the same time, I should be very well pleased that you could also have that in view, Sir Reginald."

"Sir, you have nothing to expect from my interest," said Sir Reginald sternly; and, rising as he spoke, while the servant announced the carriage, "I must wish you good morning." Then with a slight bow he quitted the room, but turned back, and taking Edith's hand, said, "I hope I shall find you here when I return." Edith merely bowed, and in another instant he was gone.

"Sir Reginald is very much altered," said Mr. M'Dow, after a long and rather solemn pause. "He's not like the same person. I doubt he leads a hard life; and it's said he's over head and ears in debt already. In fact, if it had not been for your friend Captain Malcolm, who bought some of the finest wood at Glenroy, I believe there would not have been a stick standing."

"But the poor people!" exclaimed Edith mournfully; "what will become of them?"

"Indeed, they're going to the mischief as fast as they can," said Mr. M'Dow. "What with wild doctrines, absentees, and whisky, there's no dealing with them."

"Yet I hear good accounts of Mr. Stuart's people from Inch Orran," said Edith; "that they are sober, peaceful, and industrious."

"There was outcry enough about the improvements there, I can tell you, when they were first set agoing," said Mr. M'Dow, evasively; "but, however, Mr. Stuart makes himself a perfect slave amongst his people. I wouldn't lead the life he does for three times the money."

"Surely, Mr. M'Dow," said Edith earnestly, "it is incumbent upon every clergyman to labour diligently in his calling. If the poor ask nothing from you but the words of eternal life, and you disregard their cry!—"

"Oh, these were different times from the present," said Mr. M'Dow coolly.

"I'm surprised to hear anybody speak in that way to Mr. M'Dow," interrupted his lady warmly; "his sermons would stand the printing any day! but he's just thrown away where he is!" and Mrs. M'Dow rose with a very angry face.

"It's a sore trial to one's patience," said Mr. M'Dow, "to be preaching to a set of wretches that will not take the pains so much as to come and listen

to what's said to them. How can you make any impression when that's the case?"

"By going to their houses," said Edith ; "the visit of a clergyman is always gratifying even to the worst of his flock."

"I don't think it's for a minister, with a young family of his own, to be going much amongst sick people," said Mrs. M'Dow.

"Was not he a faithful pastor who said, 'I am as much in God's keeping in the sick man's chamber as my own ?'" said Edith.

"Ay, ay, it's easy speaking," replied Mr. M'Dow ; "but the truth of the matter is, I really don't like to go to their houses ; they're a dirty set, and I have an extremely delicate stomach."

Edith turned away in disgust.

"Stand still till I fasten your pelisse," said Mrs. M'Dow, giving Mysie a shake ; "and you must not take away that," trying to wrest from the reluctant grasp of Miss Mysie a cup which she had appropriated to herself, and which she set up a great roar at being forced to relinquish.

"Whisht, dear Mysie," cried the fond father ; "you know you must not take away that ; and it's not like a lady in a fine new pelisse to be crying that way. Such a grand pelisse too, and you've been so good till now ! You know I'll not bring you back again, my dawtie, if you greet that way ; the fact is, I believe she's wearied, poor bit wifey ! So, perhaps, we had as well be moving."

Edith was too much shocked and disgusted to ask them to prolong their visit ; she sighed in bitterness of heart as she thought of the wide-spreading evil of even one worldly-minded and remiss clergyman, and of the awful responsibility those incur who appoint such to be the ministers of God !

" You'll make our apologies to her Ladyship," said Mr. M'Dow ; " and I shall write my views more at large to Sir Reginald ; it was unfortunate that he should happen to have been engaged, as the fact is, Mrs. M'Dow and I had made up our minds to spend the day here ; but I've no doubt he'll think better on the subject when he gives it a fair consideration."

Edith felt relieved when she saw the party drive off in a very gay carriage hired for the occasion.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE day was now advanced, and Edith expected that when Lady Elizabeth should emerge from her apartment, it would be to take her departure ; but instead of that she received a message requesting her to wait upon her Ladyship in her dressing-room. Thither she repaired, and found her in her usual little, frivolous bustle.

“I sent for you, my dear, to say that as I don’t feel quite well this morning, I think I shall remain where I am ; and I have just been writing a note to Monsieur Lamotte to desire him to come hither. I must say it was very cross in Florinda to prevent my bringing him ; and my poor, dear loves of dogs, it makes me wretched to think how they must be pining in my absence ; but I really think the air of this place suits me better than that of the cottage. To tell you the truth, I never liked a cottage ; ‘tis always unbecoming, and it was a mere matter of convenience my going there at all ; but with my poor pittance, what could I do ? However, I am now resolved to come to an understanding with my daughter, as I think it quite shameful that I should be starving on a miserable two

thousand a year, while she is living *en princesse*. I have seen a good deal, but I have never seen anything to surpass the style of living here, and the extravagance of the whole establishment my maid tells me is excessive. Did you ever see such a house, such a table, such dress, such equipage—all perfect, to be sure—but the very perfection of extravagance?"

"I fear Lady Waldegrave will indeed bring herself into great difficulties," said Edith, "unless something can be done."

"Something *must* be done," said Lady Elizabeth sharply. "It is absolutely impossible I can live in this country upon the wretched sum allowed me; as it is, I have been obliged to contract debt which I must look to her for discharging, and then let there be a proper allowance settled upon me. I mention all this to you, my dear, because I think you are the person to manage matters between Florinda and me; I have too much delicacy to enter on the subject myself, either with my daughter or her husband."

Edith almost sickened at this new development of folly and misconduct; she saw the evils were far beyond her reach, and that all her attempts to stem the torrent which was advancing would be in vain.

"You must excuse me, Lady Elizabeth," she said mildly, "from undertaking the office of adjusting your difference with Lady Waldegrave; if I could render you any service, I would most willingly do it; but I have reason to believe Lady Waldegrave is not in a condition to better your circumstances at present."

"The fact is, child, you know nothing at all about it," said her Ladyship angrily ; "and I must find some one else who does ; so I shall remain here for some days at least ; during that time I shall endeavour to come to some arrangement with my daughter. In the meantime, I must send the carriage for my physician." And she rang the bell to give her orders.

The thought of a prolonged stay in such a house, and under such circumstances, was most painful and embarrassing to Edith, and only one way appeared by which she could extricate herself from it. Lady Arabella Conway had repeatedly invited her to spend some time with her ; and she had promised that if she could leave Lady Elizabeth before the Ribleys' return, she would do so. At any time the performance of this promise would have been a pleasure to her, but doubly so on the present occasion. She therefore immediately made known her intentions to Lady Elizabeth, who, seeing she was not likely to be of use to her at present, gave her assent to the proposal.

Lady Waldegrave heard of her mother's extended visit and Edith's proposed departure with surprise and displeasure. "If mamma really has a cold, and will keep quietly in her room, it will be all very well," said she ; "but in a few days, when those tiresome tradespeople will have made an end of their work, I expect my whole *corps dramatique*, and if her Ladyship attempts to join it——" Here she gave a groan and a shrug. "And then it is so cruel in you, Edith, to

desert me at such a time, when you might be useful to me in a thousand ways. In the first place, I am quite certain you could, if you would take the trouble, get mamma to assist me in my present difficulties. Indeed, if she does not, I do not know what I shall do—I am so pestered for money."

"And you are going to have a houseful of company?"

"Certainly; I must have company, and I must have amusement. I am already dying of *ennui*."

"And yet you have everything the world can bestow—rank, wealth, youth, beauty—the husband of your choice—a lovely boy. Ah, Florinda, since you find all these insufficient for your happiness, will you not seek it in still higher, better things?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, don't begin to preach! or if you will, pray reserve your sermon for Sir Reginald, who requires it much more than I do. In truth, Edith, you know nothing of the world; and I assure you, you greatly overrate my advantages. In the first place, my rank is next to nothing, and but for other accompaniments, I certainly should never have attained the consequence in society which I have done. Then as to my fortune, that is not half sufficient to enable me to keep pace with the people I live among. As for the 'husband of my choice,' you saw the humour he came home in last night. No—by-the-bye *you* did not see it, as it was all reserved for me. But I shall not enter upon that subject at present. What I wish to say is, that before you leave

me, I do wish you would sound mamma a little on money matters. If she would assist me with a thousand pounds or two, it would, I assure you, be a relief to me at present." Edith now ventured to hint to her the real state of the case with regard to Lady Elizabeth's finances; but Lady Waldegrave heard it with an incredulous smile.

"All that only tends to confirm me in my belief that she is actually hoarding money," said she; "and indeed, it is scarcely possible it can be otherwise; for although she is for ever buying trumpery of some sort, yet the things she buys *are* such trumpery that 'tis impossible she can spend her fortune in that way."

"So far from hoarding money, Lady Elizabeth assures me she is actually in want of it," said Edith.

"Pshaw, that must be absolute nonsense," said Lady Waldegrave impatiently. "However, I see you don't know mamma, so you are no hand to deal with her, since you take for gospel all she says. I must get my steward to speak to her, though these sort of people are all so stupid and tiresome, I hate to have anything to do with them. I hope you will prove a better actress than you are an agent, for I see you are really not *au fait* in that department. If you are resolved to go to-day, do pray return soon, as I wish to begin the rehearsals; and, *à propos*, do secure that handsome Mr. Melcombe for me. I shall invite him as soon as the house is ready. Pray tell him all this, and—"

But here the entrance of visitors interrupted her

Ladyship before Edith could reply. The party consisted of some fashionable, and of course favourite, young men from town, and were hailed with delight by Lady Waldegrave, who was again all animation and seeming happiness. The Ladies Bingly made their appearance, and for the first time showed signs of animation.

In a little while Lady Arabella Conway was announced. She had received Edith's note, as she was stepping into her carriage, and had immediately driven to Woodlands, as she said, to carry off her prize. Edith was too sincere to attempt to return in kind the expressions of regret Lady Waldegrave then thought proper to utter at losing her, and she almost recoiled from the tender embrace that was bestowed upon her at parting. It was not till she found herself within the precincts of Oakley House that her spirits revived, and she felt that she breathed a purer, better atmosphere.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ADMIRAL CONWAY and Mr. Melcombe were walking before the house, and a groom was in attendance with a led horse.

"So, you have left all the gaieties of Woodlands, to come and rusticate with us?" said the Admiral, as he welcomed Edith with all a sailor's cordiality. "After that, I forbid any man, woman, child, or animal, to quit my dominions while Miss Malcolm remains; we must all make common cause, to show our sense of the compliment she has paid us. Parker"—(to the groom)—"Mr. Melcombe's horse may be turned out to grass, for he won't require it for six weeks at least."

"There is no disputing such commands," said Mr. Melcombe, with a smile; "so," addressing the servant, "I shall not want my horse to-day."

"No, nor to-morrow neither," said the Admiral. Then turning to Edith—"Here have I been urging this gentleman to remain a week or two with us quietly here to no purpose; but no sooner does a fair lady appear than he knocks under at once. You see your influence, so make a good use of it; it will be

all the stronger for being exercised, as my Arabella knows," said he, patting his lady on the shoulder with an air of good-humoured raillery.

"My influence must be so very small," said Edith, "that I suspect it can only serve as a sort of cat's-paw for your own power."

"What an invidious insinuation!" exclaimed the Admiral. "I appeal to you, Melcombe, if such is the case?"

"Not on the present occasion," said Mr. Melcombe; and he coloured as he said it, as though he meant more than he expressed.

"That is spoken like an honest man," said the Admiral; "but, indeed, let women say as they will, we are, upon the whole, much more open and avowed in all our proceedings than they are. Don't you agree with me, Melcombe?"

Mr. Melcombe was silent for a few moments, as if struggling with his emotion; then, in an agitated voice, replied, "Not in my own case;" then, as if he had said too much, he turned abruptly round and walked away.

A pause ensued, which Lady Arabella was the first to break: "Much as I admire both Mr. Melcombe's character and manners," said she, "I confess there is a mystery about him, that (to say the least of it) is not pleasant."

"There is no mystery about his character," said the Admiral; "that is well known, and I'll venture to say a braver and a better man does not exist.

There are only two things I wish respecting him : the one is, that he belonged to the British navy ; the other, that I had a spare daughter to bestow upon him."

"There is something so open, so noble, I may say, in his countenance and air that seems quite inconsistent with concealment ; and yet he sedulously shuns all allusion not only to his family, but even to his birthplace, or connections of any kind," said Lady Arabella.

"In short, you have just the besetting sin of your sex, Bell ; not satisfied with all you have heard, from good authority, of this young man's character and conduct, you must have the history of his parents—his mother's maiden name, of course, with a certificate of his birth and baptism. What the plague does it signify in what parish such a man was born ?"

"I have never been able to discover even to what country he belongs," continued Lady Arabella. "His name is English, but his accent and pronunciation, though good, are not perfectly English. In short, Miss Malcolm," said she, smiling, "take an old woman's advice, and don't fall in love with him till you know more about him."

"I shall certainly follow your advice," replied Edith in the same tone.

"And if I were a bonnie lass," said the Admiral, "and such a noble fellow came to court me, I should at once give him my hand, and say, if I could not sing,—

' Oh, yes, I will follow, I will sail the world over,
Nor think of my home, when I look at my lover.'

Lady Arabella and Edith laughed at the Admiral's romantic ardour in his friend's cause.

"But I can tell you what," said the Admiral, "you need not trouble your heads about Mr. Melcombe's heart; for, on my rallying him on that point to-day, he acknowledged to me that his affections were engaged to one whom he had loved from childhood—there's constancy for you!"

Edith felt a little piqued at the Admiral's supposing the state of Mr. Melcombe's affections could be of any consequence to her; and after a little more chat they separated to dress for dinner. The dinner party was increased by the arrival of some chance visitors, but Mr. Melcombe contrived to place himself beside Edith at table, and, in spite of all her resolutions, her reserve gave way, and she found herself insensibly talking to him of Mrs. Macauley, Glenroy, and Inch Orran, as she would have done to an old friend. In reply to a question of Edith's he acknowledged having been in the Highlands when a boy; but he evinced so much emotion at the interrogation that she was sorry she had put it, and immediately changed the conversation.

"Certainly some painful mystery attaches to this young man," she thought. "I wish I knew what it is, for he seems very amiable, and at times looks very melancholy."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THERE is no surer mark of a selfish character than that of shrinking from the truth. Even in its gentlest, mildest form, it comes an abhorred apparition to those who, sunk in their own silken dreams, would keep their eyes closed against all the conviction of unpleasing reality. So it was with those whom Edith had tenderly sought to awaken to the knowledge of the simplest and most obvious of even worldly truths. Each disliked even the little she had done, although they were too much disunited to agree even on that point, or indeed to be aware of what had passed on either side. Edith was, however, no sufferer by the disgrace into which she had fallen, as she was allowed to remain for some days in uninterrupted tranquillity, and seldom did days pass away more pleasantly. Each brought its round of religious duties, of benevolent actions, of tranquil pleasures, and rational enjoyments.

When there was no company Mr. Melcombe commonly read for an hour or two in the morning; and he possessed all the requisites for that most rare of all accomplishments, having a fine voice, a correct ear, quick perceptions, good taste, and perfect simplicity.

A discussion one day arose as to the choice of a book from among those which lay scattered on the library table. Lady Arabella proposed the Life of Howard the Philanthropist ; the Admiral wished to hear the Memoirs of Pepys—"For," said he, "the one will send us all to prison ; the other will take us to court and the Admiralty, where we shall surely find ourselves in better company. What say you, Miss Malcolm ?"

"I am rather inclined to go to prison with Howard than to court with Pepys," replied Edith.

"Let us try both, and see whether the philanthropist or the courtier has the best of it," said Mr. Melcombe ; and he read a few passages from each alternately.

*Extracts from the Diary of S. PEPYS, and from the
Journal of HOWARD the Philanthropist.*

PEPYS.

"This morning I put on my best black cloth suit, trimmed with scarlet ribbon, very neat, with my cloak lined with velvet, and a new beaver, which altogether is very noble."

HOWARD.

"Let it be my earnest enquiry, how I shall best serve God in the station which he has assigned me."

PEPYS.

"Thus I have ended this month with the greatest joy that ever I did any in my life, because I have

spent the greatest part of it with abundance of joy and honour, and pleasant journeys, and brave entertainments, and without cost of money. Thus we end this month as I said, after the greatest glut of content that ever I had ; only under some difficulty, because of the plague which grows mighty upon us—the last week being about 1700 or 1800 dead of the plague.”

HOWARD.

“Ease, affluence, and honours, are temptations which the world holds out; but, remember, the fashion of this world passeth away. On the other hand, fatigue, poverty, suffering, and dangers, with an approving conscience—O God ! my heart is fixed trusting on Thee ! *My God !* Oh, glorious words ! there is a treasure, in comparison of which all things in this world are as dross.”

PEPYS.

“Lord’s Day. Up : and put on my coloured silk suit—very fine—and my new periwig, bought a good while since, but durst not wear, because the plague was in Westminster when I bought it ; and it is a wonder what will be the fashion after the plague is done as to periwigs, for nobody will dare to buy any hair, for fear of the infection, that it had been cut out off the heads of people dead of the plague.”

HOWARD.

—“I would look to the moral source from whence all evil and suffering have been derived, and

should, at least, endeavour to diminish their bitterness. And, oh, how should I bless God, if such a worm is made the instrument of alleviating the miseries of my fellow-creatures, and to connect more strongly the social bond by mutual exertions for mutual relief!"

PEPYS.

"To church, and heard a good sermon upon,— 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and its righteousness, and all things shall be added to you ;' a very excellent and persuasive, good and moral sermon. He showed, like a wise man, that righteousness is a surer way of being rich than sin and villainy."

HOWARD.

"Sunday Evening.—Very desirous of returning with a right spirit, not only wiser, but better—a cheerful humility, a more general love and benevolence to my fellow-creatures—watchful of my thoughts, my words, my actions—resigned to the will of God, that I may walk with God, and lead a more useful and honourable life in this world."

PEPYS.

"Abroad with my wife, the first time that ever I rode in my own coach, which do make my heart rejoice, and praise God ; and pray Him to bless it to me, and continue it."

HOWARD.

"Look forward, O my soul!—how low, how mean, how little is everything but what has a view to the glorious world of light, life, and love! The preparation of the heart is of God. Prepare the heart, O God! of thy unworthy creature; and unto Thee be all glory, through the boundless ages of eternity."

"What important lessons may be learned from reading these passages," said Lady Arabella. "Who could recognise in these characters the creation of the same divine mind?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Edith, with fervour, "who but must feel the contrast which they exhibit between the love of duty and the love of self? between the pure and exalted aspirations of Christian piety and benevolence, and the grovelling sentiments of mere worldly interest?"

"Why, surely no one will pretend to say these varieties of human nature are fair specimens of any two distinct classes in the world?" said the Admiral, who loved a little argument for its own sake. "At least if there be occasionally a Howard, who in all the emergencies of life can raise his mind to the first great Cause, surely we have few or no Pepys' in these days of mental cultivation."

"That there are few Howards may be granted," said Melcombe; "but Pepys's character I fear is neither an antiquated nor an overcharged picture; his dialect may be out of fashion, as his dresses would

now be, but his sentiments are those felt by all vain and vulgar minds to this day ; and it must be the very truth and universality of their application which gives his Diary its chief interest."

"Ay, to be sure," said the Admiral, "I had forgot the breed of modern dandies, male and female, whose Sabbath-day thoughts, were they put in black and white, like poor Pepys's, would not be—‘Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord?’ but, How shall I most becomingly trick out and adorn my body, so as to excite the admiration and envy of my fellow-creatures?"

‘ Himself so much the source of his delight,
His Maker has no beauty in his sight,’

as your favourite Cowper says."

"And the mind of Cowper, awfully and mysteriously as it was occasionally eclipsed, still shone with a divine light, which has awakened and exalted the hearts of thousands of his fellow-creatures," said Melcombe.

"But," said the Admiral, "if we could make a free choice and form our own characters, could we hesitate, think you, in preferring the mind of a Howard to that of a Pepys?"

"That is entirely a supposititious question," replied Melcombe, "since we know that of the many millions of spirits called into this state of existence there are none whose natural bias is not to evil. But He who gave to Howard the power of becoming a ministering spirit to all who required his sympathy and aid, and

enlightened his mind with that divine love which communicates itself to all around — He too placed Pepys in this visible world, and surrounded him with like means of improvement ; yet how strange and sad to read the transcript of his heart in his Diary, filled as it is with disgusting frivolity and unfeeling levity ! His ideas of God are scarcely worthy of a savage. Of moral beauty he seems to have formed no conception ; the sufferings of others he appears to have viewed with perfect indifference, and even with pleasure, if he were likely to gain any advantage by them. Surely, had his ‘one talent,’ such as it was, been well applied, he would have handed down to posterity a very different account of his stewardship from that which now stains his memory.”

“I hope you don’t mean to say it is requisite we should all be Howards ?” said the Admiral, somewhat testily.

“By no means,” replied Melcombe ; “at least not to the same extent or in the same way ; but I think each may be, and many doubtless are, Howards in their own sphere of action. Were it otherwise, some of our noblest faculties would have been given in vain, and must lie useless and unemployed.”

“But how do you account for Pepys’s constant flow of cheerfulness and contentment ?” demanded the Admiral ; “to all appearance he was a happier man than Howard.”

“I cannot dignify Pepys’s inane selfish complacency with the name of happiness,” replied Melcombe ; “at

least it must have been merely the happiness of an animal or an idiot, while Howard's must have been that of an angel or superior being. His tranquillity rested on principles which time would only confirm and enlarge, while the enjoyment of the other depended on mean, trivial circumstances, which could yield no rational satisfaction, and which consequently must have been as perishable in its nature as it was worthless in its results."

"Believe me, my good friend," said the Admiral, "your standard is too high; were all hearts laid as open as poor Pepys's, we should find thousands and tens of thousands of respectable, well-behaved people every whit as bad, many much worse, and all believing themselves on the high road to heaven."

"That may be," said Melcombe; "for the scale of humanity rises by innumerable steps, from the lowest to the highest state; but surely the more our moral and intellectual powers are enlarged and improved in this stage of our existence, the higher will be our destiny hereafter; for we can scarcely doubt that time and eternity are but different periods of the same state, requiring the same dispositions and faculties; and if so, who would not have lived and died a Howard rather than a Pepys?"

"I like the notion of our retaining our identity," said Lady Arabella; "and to think that that many-coloured web called experience, which we weave here mingled with so many bitter tears, is to serve some purpose hereafter. I have always loved those

verses of Gambold's, where this idea is finely expanded." And she rose, took down the volume, and read

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE.

" So many years I've seen the sun,
 And call'd these eyes and hands my own ;
 A thousand little acts I've done,
 And childhood have, and manhood known ;
 O what is life ! and this dull round
 To tread, why was a spirit bound ?

" So many airy draughts and lines,
 And warm excursions of the mind,
 Have fill'd my soul with great designs,
 While practice grovell'd far behind :
 O what is thought ! and where withdraw
 The glories which my fancy saw ?

" So many tender joys and woes
 Have on my quivering soul had power ;
 Plain life with heightening passions rose,
 The boast or burden of their hour :
 O what is all we feel ! why fled
 Those pains and pleasures o'er my head ?

" So many human souls divine,
 So at one interview displayed,
 Some oft and freely mix'd with mine,
 In lasting bonds my heart have laid :
 O what is friendship ! why imprest
 On my weak, wretched, dying breast ?

" So many wondrous gleams of light,
 And gentle ardours from above,
 Have made me sit, like seraph bright,
 Some moment on a throne of love :
 O what is virtue ! why had I,
 Who am so low, a taste so high !

“ Ere long, when sovereign wisdom wills,
 My soul an unknown path shall tread,
And strangely leave, who strangely fills
 This frame, and waft me to the dead.
O what is death ! ‘Tis life’s last shore,
Where vanities are vain no more ;
Where all pursuits their goal obtain,
And life is all retouch’d again ;
Where in their bright result shall rise
Thoughts, virtues, friendships, griefs, and joys.’

“ That is a very pleasing creed, and more especially at our time of day, Arabella,” said the Admiral ; “ for I should be sorry to think that after having weathered it together these forty years, we should lose sight of each other for evermore when once we parted company.—Come now, lay aside your books and work, and get your cloaks and bonnets.”

CHAPTER XL.

ON the return of the little party from their walk, they found that Lady Waldegrave and Sir Reginald had been calling; at least so it was to be inferred from cards which had been left for each individual of the family. There was also a note to Edith, requesting of her to return to Woodlands the following day, as arrangements were now making for the theatricals, in which she was expected to bear a part. A *P.S.* expressed a hope that Mr. Melcombe would likewise join the party, adding that a choice of two principal characters should be reserved for him as a mark of especial favour. When she had read the note, Edith presented it to Mr. Melcombe. "I have no right to withhold an invitation," said she; "but I certainly wish Lady Waldegrave had conveyed this one through some other medium."

"Through no other medium could it have been so acceptable," he replied, as he took the note. "But even through it the invitation is not a gratifying one. I am sure I need scarcely ask what is your intention; but may I beg that since Lady Waldegrave has

done me the honour to insert my name in your invitation, you will oblige me by including me in your refusal?"

"You shall ride there with me to-morrow and make your own excuse," said the Admiral; "we have been rather remiss in our duties in that quarter."

"I must beg to be excused from that also," said Mr. Melcombe.

"Why so?" inquired the Admiral; "Sir Reginald left a card for you, and his lady invites you to the house in any character you choose. What more would you have?"

"Sir Reginald could not intend to call upon *me*," said Mr. Melcombe, with peculiar emphasis, and colouring deeply; "but at any rate it is not for me to return the visit at present; the time will come, I trust, when ——" He stopped, and seemed to repress the words which were already on his lips.

"When what?" asked the Admiral bluntly.

Mr. Melcombe's eyes were cast down, as if in meditation, while his varying expression testified that it was of no tranquil kind; but the momentary cloud passed from his brow, and, looking up, he said, "When Sir Reginald and I may meet upon more equal terms than we can do at present."

"I begin to think you are really a strange fellow, Melcombe," said the Admiral gravely.

"In other words, a suspicious character," said Melcombe, forcing a smile.

"No, no; there are no suspicions as to either your

character or circumstances ; both are open as noon-day ; but still I don't know what to make of you."

Mr. Melcombe was silent for a few seconds ; he then said, in a calm but melancholy tone, " Think of me as one whom a single rash, imprudent, but I may add, guiltless act, has divested of home, friends, and country ; but, believe me when I say, the time is not far distant when I may again claim them all."

" And all, I doubt not, will be ready to claim you, my dear fellow," said the kind old Admiral, shaking his friend's hand most heartily ; " so do as you like ; only I can't allow you such latitude as Lady Waldegrave does, for I can only wish you to remain with us in one character, and that one your own."

" I know not how it is," said Lady Arabella to Edith, as they passed into the adjoining room, " but of late Mr. Melcombe has shown a degree of sensitiveness as to his situation which I never observed before. Since we have been acquainted with him he never dropped the slightest hint that could lead us to suppose he was other than what he seems."

Edith could not solve the mystery, but she felt more and more interested in one whose whole bearing and deportment raised him far above suspicion. It was impossible for her not to be aware that Mr. Melcombe regarded her with no ordinary degree of interest ; and she could therefore only retain her original supposition that they had previously met, but somehow connected with circumstances too painful to be even adverted to.

In spite of the Admiral's remonstrances, Mr. Melcombe persisted in going to town the following day, but under promise of a speedy return ; and the ladies, with their veteran, set off to Woodlands.

They must have been nice observers who could have detected anything amiss beneath the smiling surface that there met their view. All around, within and without, breathed only of pleasure—pleasure in its fairest, most seductive form ; the young, the noble, the beautiful, seemingly happy in themselves and each other, and amidst all the charms of nature and the refinements of art. No unpleasing thought or corroding care was visible in Lady Waldegrave's countenance, which was all gaiety and delight ; but it was the gaiety and delight of a mind under the influence of excitement, and closed for the time against conviction or feeling. She was surrounded by a little band of admirers, who seemed to vie with each other in paying homage, and offering up incense at her shrine.

"I am delighted to see you, dear Lady Arabella," said she, in her sweetest of false manners, "and thank you for having brought back our runaway," embracing Edith as she spoke.

"You are giving me credit I do not deserve," said Lady Arabella, "as I assure you I have no design of parting with her ; and even if you had my consent, you would find it no easy matter to obtain Admiral Conway's."

"Oh, *à propos*, Sir Reginald will of course be in the billiard-room, I must let him know Admiral Conway

is here," said Lady Waldegrave. Then, turning to Edith, she inquired, in a low but significant tone, "Has a certain Mr. Melcombe nothing to answer for in detaining you from us?"

Edith coloured as she replied, "There was no occasion for any one to give advice on a subject on which my own mind was made up from the first."

"It was only for the ballet you were required," said Lady Waldegrave carelessly; "but if you look upon dancing as one of the seven deadly sins, I should be sorry you committed it to oblige me;" and she turned contemptuously away.

When people are disposed to ridicule, 'tis in vain to attempt to enter into any explanation with them; Edith therefore suffered the sarcasm to pass without contradiction.

Lady Elizabeth now entered from an adjoining apartment, and, having welcomed the Admiral and Lady Arabella, and conversed for a little with them, she next fastened, as usual, upon Edith.

"I hope you are come to remain with us, my dear," said she, "for I have much to say to you."

"I have engaged to remain with Lady Arabella until you return to the cottage," said Edith; "and, to judge from appearances, there is no want of company here."

"Why, there is, to be sure, a mob of people—rather too many, indeed; but I don't know how it is, everyone is employed in their own way, and, in short—but come this way; let us go into the veranda, where we

shall be quiet. You see how wonderfully well I am ; indeed I feel quite restored—quite renovated ; Lord Milberry said to me yesterday, I had got *le teint reposé comme à quinze ans.*"

Edith could with truth say she was happy to see that her Ladyship looked better ; and the lady went on : "It is particularly fortunate that I should have regained my looks at this time, as I have a little plan in contemplation, the success of which will depend very materially upon my appearance. You are aware, I suppose, of Florinda's intention of having a French play and ballet performed here next week. I should have been happy to take a part in the play ; but really the labour of getting by heart I found would be too much for me ; in fact, I cannot take the trouble to commit anything to memory ; then the fatigue of dancing in the ballet is more than I am yet able for ; indeed, the very thoughts of it made Florinda, poor dear, quite wretched—so I gave that up also ; but something is expected of me on the occasion."

"Nothing more, I am sure," said Edith, "than that you should be a pleased spectator."

"You are quite mistaken," said her Ladyship, with an air of displeasure ; "anybody may be that, but *I* must be something more ; I am expected to show off ; it is the tax always levied on talented persons ; in fact, we are public property." Edith saw remonstrance would be vain, so she remained silent. "However, as I cannot undertake the drudgery of the play, and am not equal to the exertion required

in the ballet, I have devised a little interlude for myself, which I think will have a charming effect. I intend to come upon the stage in a little car, as a—a—in short, as Venus, with little Dudley in my lap, as Cupid, in a flesh-coloured silk dress and silver wings. My own dress I have not determined upon; but I think of having it *couleur de soupir, étouffé*; that, you know, will be appropriate, and I shall sing *Ecco d'Amor il Tempio*. The design is pretty—don't you think so?"

Edith felt as if she could both laugh and cry at the idea of this preposterous exhibition, and she said something about Lady Waldegrave not approving of it.

"Oh, as to that, the whole is to be kept a profound secret from Florinda, and to be quite a charming surprise to her. You must therefore promise me not to breathe a syllable of it to anybody; indeed, had I not entertained a very high opinion of your prudence and good taste, I should not have let you into my secret."

Edith would fain have tried to open the infatuated old woman's eyes to the folly and degradation of making herself a spectacle for the finger of scorn to point at; but her gentle remonstrances were like the sweet south blowing, not on a bank of violets, but of nettles. Lady Elizabeth cut them short with much asperity. At that moment she heard Sir Reginald's voice inquiring for her, and in another instant he was by her side in the veranda. His air and manner were at first a little embarrassed, but he soon regained his self-possession, and, expressing his pleasure at again

seeing her there, he added a hope that she had come to remain with them. Edith could only repeat what she had before said on that subject.

Sir Reginald looked displeased, then said, "You pay your relations a bad compliment, certainly, in preferring the society of strangers to theirs, or there must be something very attractive at Oakley."

"Oh, by-the-bye!" exclaimed Lady Elizabeth, "that puts me in mind of what had almost escaped me—a little rumour I heard yesterday about you and a Mr.—what is his name—only a little flirtation perhaps—eh?"

Edith blushed, and the consciousness she had done so, and that Sir Reginald's eyes were fixed upon her in deep scrutiny, increased her confusion. She then replied, "I am ignorant of any rumours you could have heard relating to me—certainly none which could be at all interesting either to myself or others, if they were founded in truth."

"It is better," said Sir Reginald, "when there is no occasion given for rumours, either true or false."

Edith made no reply, but motioned to Lady Elizabeth to re-enter the drawing-room; and in spite of Sir Reginald's attempt to detain her, she rejoined the party she had quitted.

Lady Elizabeth was in such spirits at the thoughts of the brilliant success that awaited her, that she continued to chatter away without intermission, while Lady Waldegrave whispered, smiled, and flirted with the loungers who surrounded her. Sir Reginald con-

versed with the Admiral, but his air was abstracted, and in the midst of all that was gay and brilliant his animation seemed forced and joyless. The visit was indeed productive of little pleasure to any of the party, and Lady Arabella availed herself of the privilege of fashion to make it a short one. When taking leave, the Admiral, as if recollecting himself, said, "By-the-bye, I believe I ought to apologise to you, Sir Reginald, for my friend Mr. Melcombe ; he is gone to town this morning."

Sir Reginald slightly bowed in acknowledgment, while he said, "I am not aware, Admiral, that any apology is due to me, as I have not the honour of Mr. Melcombe's acquaintance."

"I beg your pardon, Sir Reginald," said the Admiral, in his usual straightforward manner, "but I understood you had left a card for my friend at the same time you called upon me."

Sir Reginald turned on Lady Waldegrave a look of inquiry, which changed to one of displeasure, as she said with affected carelessness, "I believe a card was left for Mr. Melcombe. If report says true," she added, with a malicious smile, to Edith, "he is likely to prove more to us than a mere visiting acquaintance."

"Perhaps your Ladyship is in Mr. Melcombe's confidence," said the Admiral, "and can tell us the name of the fair lady who has been able to fix even a roving sailor's affections from childhood?"

"No," said Lady Waldegrave haughtily ; "Mr. Melcombe and his *liaisons* are alike unknown to me."

Lady Arabella saw a blunt retort ready to burst from the Admiral, and hastened to put a stop to all recrimination by taking leave. Lady Elizabeth again whispered secrecy to Edith, as she embraced her at parting. Lady Waldegrave's manner continued cold and pettish, and Sir Reginald, as he handed her into the carriage, uttered a half-angry, half-sorrowful remonstrance against her for not remaining with them. But, homeless as she was, Edith would have preferred any species of dependence to the gilded snares of folly she there saw spread around.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE following day, as Edith sat alone in the drawing-room, Mr. Melcombe entered. His appearance was so unexpected at the moment that she coloured a little with surprise as she met his salutation. He too at first appeared somewhat embarrassed, but quickly regaining his self-possession, he advanced to the table at which she was sitting.

"I dare scarcely hope for a welcome after so short an absence," said he, as he extended his hand to her, with something of hesitation in his manner.

"It would be a bad compliment to say that absence enhanced any one's value," replied Edith, with a smile, as she shook hands with him.

"Even if it did, it would be paying almost too great a price," said he, and he fixed his eyes on her with a look and meaning she could not misunderstand ; "but," he added, "I flatter myself I may claim a welcome from you, when I tell you I have seen your old friend Mrs. Macauley."

"Have you indeed been to visit Mrs. Macauley ?" exclaimed Edith, with glad surprise. "Ah, how kind ! is she well and happy as usual ?"

"Perfectly so; and I am charged with many affectionate remembrances to you, and apologies for not having answered your last letter, as she has been even more than usually occupied of late."

"Doing good and giving pleasure to all around her," said Edith. "Oh, how I long to see her! I have never been so long separated from her; and I fear, at her advanced age, such a change of life and habits, such a total deprivation of all the comforts she has been accustomed to, must be severely felt."

"Do not be uneasy on her account," said Mr. Melcombe; "she looks almost as well and happy as she did at Glenroy."

"You remember her, then, at Glenroy?" exclaimed Edith; but she was sorry she had yielded to the surprise of the moment, when she beheld the agitation Mr. Melcombe evinced at being thus reminded of what appeared to have been an involuntary acknowledgment. An awkward pause followed, and while confusion was still visible on the countenances of both, Sir Reginald Malcolm was announced.

At that moment Edith would have felt the presence of almost any one else a relief, but the sight of Sir Reginald only augmented her embarrassment. She, however, named Mr. Melcombe and him to each other; but she was struck with the manner in which the introduction was taken by both parties. On the part of Sir Reginald was an air of haughty scrutiny, which was met on that of Melcombe with a glow that mounted almost to his temples; and his eyes, which for an

instant flashed fire, were then hastily averted, as though he both felt and feared the interrogation. Neither spoke ; but the bearing of both denoted that sort of instinctive repugnance for which it is sometimes impossible to account. With Melcombe, however, the emotion was of a transient nature, and soon his countenance regained its wonted expression ; but the cloud did not pass so quickly from Sir Reginald's brow. Edith expressed her regret that the Admiral and Lady Arabella should be from home, having gone to pay a visit of condolence to an old friend in the neighbourhood.

"I met them as I came hither," replied Sir Reginald, "and I learnt from them that I should find you alone, and *disengaged*." He pronounced the last word with marked emphasis.

"A few minutes ago I was both," said Edith.

"And I was so fortunate as to find you so," said Mr. Melcombe. At the sound of his voice Sir Reginald turned quickly round, and regarded him for a moment with a look which seemed to say, "Who are you, sir?" and again it was met by the rising colour and embarrassed air of one to whom the interrogation was painful. Edith felt the situation of both parties was unpleasant ; but she regained her self-possession, and said, "Mr. Melcombe had just arrived from town, and when you entered I was engaged in hearing of my dear old friend Mrs. Macauley, whom he has been kindly visiting."

"I cannot claim much merit on that score," said Melcombe ; "there is something so delightful in the

sunshine of her heart, 'tis a pleasure to come within its influence."

Sir Reginald made no reply, but again cast a haughty, scrutinising glance at Mr. Melcombe, which was evidently intended to silence him; but his embarrassment had fled, and it was now met by a look perfectly open and unshrinking; and there was something so noble in the stamp of the countenance, as seemed to denote that it never had quailed—never would quail—for the fear of man. Sir Reginald turned away his proud gaze, and abruptly addressing Edith, said, "I beg a few minutes' conversation with you. I wish to see you alone."

Surprised and somewhat piqued at the haughty, peremptory manner in which this request was made, Edith hesitated to comply; but as she marked Mr. Melcombe's rising colour, and Sir Reginald's flashing eye, she hastily rose and led the way into the small drawing-room. For a few seconds Sir Reginald was silent, as if striving to gain his self-command; he then said, in a tone of assumed calmness, "May I beg to know who this gentleman—this Mr. (or as some call him) *Captain* Melcombe is, to whom I have had the honour of being introduced?"

"He is the friend of Admiral Conway," replied Edith.

"And nothing more?" demanded Sir Reginald, in the same restrained tone.

"That is surely sufficient to entitle him to civility from Admiral Conway's visitors," said Edith coldly.

"In some circumstances it might be so ; but I would know something more of this person—this *Captain Melcombe*. I would know who and what he is?" Edith was silent. Sir Reginald went on, still preserving his forced composure. "Although Admiral Conway may be imprudent enough to invite an adventurer to his house, you must permit me to say, Edith, it by no means follows as a matter of course that you ought to be drawn into an intimacy with a person of that description."

"While I remain under the roof of Admiral and Lady Arabella Conway, I shall certainly not shun holding intercourse with their friends," replied Edith, mildly but firmly.

"The Conways would show a greater consideration for you if they were more chary in their friendships," said Sir Reginald, with asperity.

"Excuse me, Sir Reginald," said Edith ; "but I have met with too much kindness from them to suffer them to be blamed, and especially on my account. I never can be injured by having their friends for my acquaintance."

"Yet you are aware that your name is already coupled with this adventurer's. Is that not injuring you?" cried Sir Reginald, now losing his self-command. Edith's colour rose ; but ere she could reply, he proceeded with increasing vehemence : "As your nearest relation, I conceive myself entitled to ascertain the truth or the falsehood of this report."

"In no capacity whatever can I admit your right

to interfere in my affairs," said Edith, rising with an air of displeasure, but he laid his hand upon her arm to prevent her leaving the room.

"Then do you refuse me the satisfaction of being able to contradict a report discreditable to yourself and your family?" said he vehemently.

"I refuse to acknowledge the authority of Sir Reginald Malcolm to demand any explanation from me," said Edith, roused beyond her usual meek endurance.

"Then I shall seek an explanation elsewhere," cried Sir Reginald passionately.

At this threat Edith's resolution failed her; she turned pale with apprehension at the thoughts of what might ensue were he to encounter Mr. Melcombe in the present irritated state of his feelings. "There is no one who can give any explanation," said she faintly. "There is none to give."

"Thanks, dear Edith; that is enough!" he cried, with a look of pleasure, as he pressed her hand. "And you forgive me—you forgive the solicitude that the inquiry——"

"I forgive everything," said Edith, "and everyone; but I must consider the liberty you have taken as unjustifiable on your part as it was unwished for on mine. And now let us part."

But Sir Reginald still held her hand, while he looked earnestly upon her. "I know you are truth itself, Edith," said he. "I am satisfied the rumour was as false as it was malicious; but"—and his eyes

flashed fire—"but I see plainly that unknown—that adventurer dares to love you! There is degradation in the very thought of your ever casting yourself away upon such a one. Promise, then, that you never will be his!"

Edith's whole face was in a glow, and for some minutes she was too much confused to reply. Sir Reginald's eyes were bent keenly upon her, and his lips were compressed, as if to restrain the workings of his breast. But soon regaining her self-possession, she replied, with calmness and dignity, "There is no subject which could be proposed on which I would bind myself by a promise to any one,—certainly not to Sir Reginald Malcolm." And she again rose to quit the room.

"But tell me," said he, still detaining her, "why did you quit Woodlands so hurriedly? Did Lady Waldegrave—was it in consequence of anything she said?"

"You can scarcely suppose, Sir Reginald, that your house and Lady Waldegrave's would have been the residence I should have made choice of," said Edith.

"But since you were there, why leave it so abruptly?"

"I went, at Lady Waldegrave's earnest solicitation, to spend *one* day with her."

"And you would not remain another to gratify me? Ah, Edith, if you but knew the hundredth part of the misery I endure!"

"Why should it be so?" said Edith earnestly; "you have all that this world can give!"

Sir Reginald's only answer was a deep sigh and an impatient wave of the head.

"Ah, Reginald, since you do not find your happiness in the follies—must I say in the vices—of the world, as no one ever did, will you not seek it in other and better sources,—your home—your child—your country—your God?" and she looked on him with eyes of almost seraph's purity and softness.

Sir Reginald's lip quivered with emotion, and for some moments he remained silent, as if struggling with himself. He then exclaimed, "I wish you would talk to Lady Waldegrave on these subjects; it is there the reform should begin. By Heaven, her caprice and extravagance would beggar a kingdom!"

"But were she to see you giving up any of your favourite pursuits——"

"That would make no difference; or, if it did, it would only be to afford her still greater scope for her heartless folly."

"At least the experiment is worth trying," said Edith.

"Excuse me," he replied impatiently; "but women cannot possibly judge of those things. They may be of use to one another in the way of advice, and if you will take up your residence with us, I am convinced you might be of service to Florinda—if anything can be of service to one so selfish and hollow. Do, then, let me persuade you to come to us."

"No, Sir Reginald, that can never be," said Edith, calmly and firmly; "from my heart, I wish Lady Waldegrave and you all happiness; I would do much to promote it if I could, but the means seem beyond my reach."

"Happiness! Ah, Edith, you little know when you talk of happiness to me! There was a time, indeed, when my happiness was in your hands; and had you borne with me a little longer—had you made a little more allowance for the folly and infatuation of a mere boyish fancy—we might both have been happier now!"

A slight blush tinged Edith's cheek, but there was no uncertain expression in her eyes, as she raised them to his with a look, grave and mild, but full of pity, while she said, "On my own account I have no regret, and I never will listen to yours. As the friend and brother of my brother, as the successor to my father, as my nearest kinsman,—in all these relations I shall ever be interested in your welfare, but in no other may you ever lay claim to my sympathy."

There was a dignity in her manner that debarred all further discussion; and Sir Reginald made no attempt to detain her, as she returned to the room they had left, but followed with an air of haughty pique and mortification. Scarcely deigning to notice Mr. Melcombe, he took leave, and in an instant his horse's feet were heard galloping down the avenue.

CHAPTER XLII.

A SCENE such as this could not fail to disturb the serenity of Edith's mind ; but yet, amidst the painful emotions which had been excited, there was one of a more pleasurable kind. Sir Reginald had said that Melcombe loved her, though that could not be, for his affections, it seemed, had long been riveted on another, while hers had been too cruelly blighted ever again to revive. No ; love it could not be on either side, but it might be something better and more enduring. She admired Mr. Melcombe's character, and was pleased with his society ; his sentiments on most subjects agreed with hers ; their tastes and pursuits were similar ; and it was therefore but natural that he should evince a degree of preference for her which one unacquainted with the real state of the parties might mistake for love. Thus argued Edith, as she repeated to herself the words which had called forth this train of reflections. But even while she repelled the idea, it nevertheless operated on her feelings ; and when she again joined him, the ease and simplicity of her manners had given place to an air of timidity and embarrassment, which he could not fail to perceive.

"Well," said the Admiral on his return, addressing Edith, "you have had no lack of *beaux* in my absence, it seems; here is one," pointing to Mr. Melcombe, "who has found his way to you, and we met another, whom I allowed to pass, after stipulating with him that he should not run away with you in my absence; if he did, I promised him a hot chase from myself and my captain when he should return." Edith's head was bent over her embroidery, and the Admiral went rattling on. "You had just come in the nick of time, Melcombe, to protect our fair prize," said he; "otherwise I suspect she would have been carried off by a gay rover. Confess," cried he, turning to Edith, "that Sir Reginald came with some such nefarious design?"

"Not absolutely," said Edith, trying to force a smile; "I was only pressed to return to Woodlands by my cousin."

"But you told him, I hope, that you preferred the company of an old couple and an absent lover," laying his hand on Mr. Melcombe's shoulder, as he sat in pensive abstraction, "to all the gay doings at Woodlands?"

Edith coloured as she thought of Reginald's ideal suggestion, when Mr. Melcombe said, in a peculiar tone, "Not *absent*, only clouded."

"That is a nice distinction, I suspect, in your case, my good friend," said the Admiral; "but we shan't differ about a word. Was this your first introduction to Sir Reginald?"

"Not my first," replied Melcombe, with some hesitation ; "but it is many years since we met."

"Many years!" repeated the Admiral, laughing ; "neither of you has been many years in the world, according to my mode of reckoning. Pray, may I ask, what you call many years ago?"

"Thirteen years, and many, many years they have appeared to me!" answered Melcombe, with a sigh.

"If he had known Reginald thirteen years ago, he must have known me too," thought Edith, for at that time Reginald and she were inseparable ; and she gazed with wonder and inquiry.

"Why, to be sure," said the Admiral, "thirteen years must be a respectable portion of your life ; but, as your old Scotch song says,

'Should auld acquaintance be forgot,'

I hope Sir Reginald and you renewed your acquaintance?"

"No," replied Melcombe, "Sir Reginald did not recognise me."

"That is not surprising" said Edith ; "for I too must have known Mr. Melcombe in those childish days, as my cousin and I were educated together."

"On some minds early impressions are faint and evanescent," replied Mr. Melcombe, evidently evading the inquiry ; "on others, they are vivid and indelible ;" and as he spoke his eyes were directed to Edith with a look of such deep and tender interest

as seemed to speak of thoughts linked with many a fond recollection.

"Don't be too secure of the indelibility of certain childish impressions," said the Admiral, with a significant look and an expressive tone.

"I thank you for your caution," replied Melcombe, with a smile, "but I think I may venture to feel secure of sentiments which have stood the test of time and absence, and which every day tends only to strengthen and confirm," and again his look seemed unconsciously bent on Edith.

"What say you to the volatility or the indelibility of early impressions, Miss Malcolm?" said the Admiral. "Are they fugitives or fixtures, think you?"

"The impressions made in childhood are certainly very strong," said Edith; "but as the mind matures, it surely becomes our duty to examine them by a better light than that of nature, and to discard or retain them, according as we find them worthy of a place in our affections."

"You are a little philosopher," cried the Admiral, "and I should fear you never would fall in love, were it not for that sweet blush of yours; but philosophy never blushes."

"I may well blush at being styled a philosopher," said Edith, with a smile.

"I suspect it is I who ought rather to do so, for having likened you to anything so odious as a female philosopher," said the Admiral; "but you must spare

a poor old weather-beaten tar. And here comes Arabella ; she will be jealous if she hears of all this blushing between us."

"Indeed, I have some reason," said Lady Arabella, as she joined them ; "for I assure you, Miss Malcolm, the Admiral was so afraid of your cousin's carrying you off in his absence, that I could scarcely prevent him from returning to guard you himself ; but with a gouty foot and a shattered arm, I think he would scarcely have been able to cope with so gallant a knight as Sir Reginald. I hope you did not find it a service of great danger, Mr. Melcombe ?"

"Had there been danger, I should certainly have welcomed it in such a cause," replied he ; "but my trials were rather those of passive endurance than of active enterprise."

Again Edith read, in the expression of his clear, eloquent eye a meaning beyond the words he uttered. Strange disjointed thoughts again came thronging upon her. "He loves one known from childhood," she thought, "and to-day he has all but acknowledged that he knew me in early life."

But in another instant she rejected the wild idea, with shame at ever having harboured it, and something of displeasure that the lover of another should thus presume to make it doubtful whether she was not the object of his secret affections. These reflections rendered her silent and abstracted during the rest of the conversation. From that time she studiously avoided all opportunities of being alone

with Mr. Melcombe, and would even have shortened her visit to Lady Arabella, had she known where to go. But, situated as she was, she had no alternative but to remain where she was. The return of the Ribleys was very uncertain, Mrs. Ribley having been taken ill at Cheltenham, and their stay having consequently been prolonged.

Lady Elizabeth's movements were too eccentric to be depended upon ; and Mrs. Macauley was still in requisition in the various capacities of sick-nurse, governess, housekeeper, and universal favourite, in the little crowded, comfortless abode of the wise Johnnie.

Such being the position of all parties, there was nothing for it but to acquiesce in the present arrangement of things. Mr. Melcombe appeared to feel the change which had taken place ; but though he looked thoughtful and melancholy, he made no attempt to win her back to the easy, friendly footing they had hitherto been upon. His attentions, if more guarded, however, seemed even more devoted than before ; and in spite of the reserve of both, there still seemed as if a secret though invisible chord of sympathy bound their minds together.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE invitation to Woodlands was again repeated, and again declined, in mild but decisive terms. Edith therefore flattered herself she should be allowed to remain, for some time at least, in the repose of neglect. But repose is not the element in which the idle and frivolous can exist themselves, or allow others to indulge in.

The day preceding Lady Waldegrave's *fête* Edith received a summons from Lady Elizabeth to repair immediately to the cottage. She was at no loss to conjecture that the impending *éclaircissement* between the mother and daughter had at last taken place, and had terminated, as she expected, in a violent *fracas*. The Admiral and Lady Arabella, alarmed at the thoughts of being deprived of their young favourite, proposed that, in case Lady Elizabeth had actually quitted Woodlands, she should be invited to take up her residence with them; and Edith promised to use her influence in prevailing upon her stepmother to consent. Lady Arabella and Mr. Melcombe accompanied her till within sight of the cottage, when the former turned back a few steps to speak to one of the gardeners.

Edith was slowly retracing her steps to rejoin her friend, when Melcombe, in a hesitating tone, and with a heightened colour, said, "Were it not very presumptuous in me either to hope or fear aught on my own account as connected with you, I should say I fear this interruption will prove only the prelude to a longer separation."

"I should have cause to grieve at anything that was to separate me from such kind and delightful friends as the Admiral and Lady Arabella," replied Edith; "but there seems no likelihood of that at present."

"But even should you remain, I must depart; I must return to Greece for a short time," said Melcombe earnestly; "and should this be my only opportunity of seeing you alone, may I hope—forgive me," said he, in increasing agitation—"forgive me if I venture to hope that even amid doubts and suspicion we know and understand each other better than when we met?"

Edith was spared the embarrassment of reply, as they were at that moment joined by Lady Arabella, who, after repeating her invitation for Lady Elizabeth, called upon her reluctant companion to retrace his steps, and the little party separated.

Edith found Lady Elizabeth in her dressing-room, extended on a couch, her physician and attendants bustling around her, and the atmosphere loaded with the fumes of hartshorn, ether, and such mental drugs as are usually supposed to minister to a mind rather than a body diseased. The paroxysm, however,

appeared to be past, as she accosted Edith in her usual weak, querulous tone ; and having embraced her in a faint, hysterical manner, she dismissed her attendants, and began, “ You find me excessively ill ; my whole system has received a shock which only the greatest skill and care will enable me to surmount ; nothing affects the looks so much as agitation, and before this happened I was looking so particularly well ! ” Here her Ladyship applied her handkerchief to her eyes, and heaved repeated sighs.

“ I trust nothing of a very serious nature has occurred ? ” said Edith soothingly.

“ Shocking ! ” was the reply, with a little hysterical sob. “ In fact, the usage I have met with—but my nerves are so shattered I shall never be able to speak of it ! ” And the small sighs now rose to little half-repressed shrieks.

“ Then do not attempt to talk of it, dear Lady Elizabeth,” said Edith, in the same bland tone.

“ Not attempt to talk of it ! ” exclaimed her Ladyship, taking the handkerchief from her face, in a sudden transport of indignation. “ I shall make a point of talking of it—the world shall hear of it ! Such ingratitude ! Such—I—I—it is too shocking and foolish ! ”

By way of turning her mind from a subject which seemed too much for it, Edith here delivered the kind messages with which she had been charged by the Admiral and Lady Arabella ; but they were received with peevish contempt. “ Don’t talk about Admiral

and Lady Arabella Conway at present," said she ; "they cannot be of the slightest service to me after the indignity I have met with. I can listen to nothing of the sort. To be so treated by my own daughter, who owes everything to me !—though, poor dear unfortunate, it is all owing to that unprincipled man. I always knew it would be so ! But, to dare to refuse me !" Here a little hysterical laugh wound up the sentence.

"Pardon me, if I venture to guess at the cause of this disagreement between you and Lady Waldegrave," said Edith gently ; "and still more, if I take upon me to assure you it is not at present in her power to assist you."

"Assist me ?" repeated her Ladyship with indignation. "You strangely mistake the matter. I required no assistance ; on the contrary, my intention was to have assisted her."

"Undoubtedly there is some mistake," said Edith.

"There was much improper behaviour—much ingratitude—and—and folly—but no mistake!"

"Excuse me if I still think there must be something misunderstood between Lady Waldegrave and you," said Edith. "I have reason to be assured that any assistance you could afford her would be most acceptable."

"Why, so I thought, and most people would think ; but it has been refused in the most insulting manner." And her whole frame quivered with indignation as she spoke.

Edith felt more and more perplexed.

"I fear you will think me very troublesome in thus presuming to press my opinion on you," said she; "but from what passed between Lady Waldegrave and me on the subject, I am certain there must be a misunderstanding on one side or other; it is very lately that she urged me to endeavour to procure your assistance to relieve her in her present embarrassments."

"That is just of a piece with the rest of her behaviour," exclaimed Lady Elizabeth. "Such duplicity! I was certain that she must desire it; it would have been ridiculous to suppose I would be otherwise than an acquisition to her; and I had spared no expense; everything had been prepared in the most perfect taste—my car, my doves, my wings—all so purely classical!"

Here a convulsive sob choked her utterance. Edith was confounded. At first she thought wounded affection and mortified vanity had actually turned her brain, till the recollection of the *fête*, and the great things destined for it, flashed upon her memory, and the whole mystery was unravelled. But what an exhibition of human folly! it was almost too humiliating to be ridiculous! Lady Elizabeth went on:

"Conceive my feelings, after having been at so much trouble and expense, to be told that she could not possibly allow such an exhibition to take place. An exhibition! what a word!—shocking and foolish! And such ingratitude, when I had been at the expense

of getting a dress for her child—quite a beautiful thing, flesh-coloured silk, with the sweetest little silver wings! Altogether the whole device was charming, and the effect would have been irresistible; but the fact is, I believe Florinda is jealous of the success which she foresaw would attend my little interlude. But am I for that reason to remain a cipher—to suffer my talents to lie useless? I consider it due to myself to make an appearance upon this occasion, and I told Florinda that unless I was to have my own way, and appear in a manner worthy of myself, I should instantly quit the house. The consequence is, you see me here!" Emotion choked further utterance.

Of all mental sufferings, perhaps the most difficult to administer relief to by honest means are those which spring from wounded vanity. The only panacea for a weak, vain mind, in a state of irritation, is flattery, and that was one which Edith would in no circumstances have applied. She sought, however, to soothe the angry feelings of her stepmother into composure, and then to reconcile her to her disappointment, by such arguments as she thought best suited to her capacity. But the attempts were fruitless; the lady would listen to nothing but her own wrongs. When in the midst of one of her angry bursts, she suddenly stopped, and exclaimed, "Now that you understand how matters are between my daughter and me, the only way in which you can be of use is, to go to her immediately, and endeavour to bring her to a sense of her duty before it is too late. I am still

willing to forgive her, upon receiving a proper apology, and being invited—for I now must insist upon being *invited* to act my part. I shall order my carriage for you, for there is not a moment to lose."

She was ringing the bell, when Edith stopped her. "Pray, excuse me, Lady Elizabeth," said she, "but I cannot really undertake this office; at least, take a little time to consider of it, and allow me the same!"

"Not one instant!" exclaimed her Ladyship vehemently; "it must be done now, or not at all."

"But it is late," answered Edith, "and the Admiral and Lady Arabella are in hopes of seeing you return with me. They expect no company, so you will find a quiet family party."

"The thing of all others I detest!" exclaimed the lady peevishly. "I detest family dinners, and I detest cottages, which are, in fact, neither more nor less than small, dull, inconvenient houses; and if the Conways imagine I am to remain mewed up in this baby-house, they are much mistaken; so let me hear no more of the Conways and their dinners, but go directly to my daughter!"—again ringing the bell violently for the carriage.

"Dear Lady Elizabeth," said Edith earnestly, "it pains me to refuse any request of yours, but indeed I cannot go to Lady Waldegrave on such an errand. I would do much to reconcile you, but I think with her that the appearance you propose to make would be unbecoming her mother—the grandmother of her child—my father's widow."

Lady Elizabeth turned almost blue with anger, while she repeated, "Grandmothers and widows!—coarse and gross! Who ever hears of such things in good society? Such terms are never used by those who understand good manners," and a little hysterical laugh rattled in her throat. She, however, quickly rallied, and went on: "However, since I am, it seems, your father's widow (certainly not what confers distinction upon me), you will allow, I hope, that I am entitled to claim the obedience of his daughter, and therefore I *command* you to go immediately to Lady Waldegrave—or even to her husband—and—and represent to them how excessively ill I have been treated by them, and that I desire I may be invited to return and sustain my part, otherwise I insist upon my car, doves, and wings, being sent to me immediately.; and then they shall see what it is to have incurred my displeasure."

Vexed as Edith was, she could not refrain from smiling at the mock dignity with which this tirade was delivered. Unwilling to accede to this preposterous request, or rather command, but afraid of the consequences of a refusal, in compassion to the wretched old woman she at last undertook the painful because almost hopeless task of acting as mediator between her and her daughter. She was not allowed much time to deliberate, for the carriage had been ordered even before her consent had been asked, and she was hurried away upon her embassy

CHAPTER XLIV.

IT had occurred to Edith that the only way in which it would be possible to reconcile parties, would be for Lady Waldegrave to give up, or at least postpone, her theatricals,—a small sacrifice, she thought, when put in comparison with even a foolish mother's displeasure. On reaching Woodlands, however, her hopes became more faint when she perceived the bustle and excitement which pervaded the whole establishment. Ladies' maids with important faces and consequential airs were seen hurrying to and fro, their hands full of flowers, feathers, and drapery ; sounds of many voices were heard declaiming, and repeating their parts in some of the rooms ; in others the tones of various instruments were heard ; and a half-open door disclosed a troop of dancers practising for the ballet. Upon being conducted to Lady Waldegrave, Edith found her not less occupied than her guests, she rehearsing her part with Lord Herbert, while one of the Ladies Bingly acted as prompter. When Miss Malcolm was announced she uttered an exclamation of pleasure, and hastened forward to receive her with more than her usual suavity and softness of address. “This is so kind

of you, my love!" said she, tenderly embracing her; "so *very* kind! I almost feared you would not come, and yet I thought you could not resist when you knew the cruel dilemma I am in."

"It was in hopes of extricating you from it I came," replied Edith.

Lady Waldegrave pressed her hand. "Dearest Edith! how very kind and affectionate! Indeed, I cannot express how much I feel obliged to you. I *always* was set upon having you, though you were so coy, and difficult to win; but, however, since we have secured you, that is enough."

"You mistake, Lady Waldegrave; I do not come on my own account."

"Oh no, not at all—you come upon mine."

"The purpose for which I have come," said Edith—

"You could only come for one purpose, I am sure," interrupted her Ladyship sportively,—"the purpose of obliging me beyond expectation; when that is done, we shall then talk of other purposes—of wise and good purposes, such as I often, very often, intend to follow, and shall, I am sure, some day or other begin to practise under your auspices; *en attendant*, you will put yourself under mine for this one day. Was it not really too much that of my principal *figurantes* Lady Sophia Marley should have sprained her ankle, and Miss Townshend's provoking old grandmother have chosen to die? so there are two frightful gaps in my *corps de ballet*; but you will—I know you will, —kindly fill one of them."

"Excuse me," said Edith gravely; I came for a very different purpose—I came at the request of Lady Elizabeth."

Lady Waldegrave's countenance changed. "What! has mamma been teasing you already with her absurdities? I thought you had been at the Conways. I sent a note there to you this morning."

Edith explained to her that she had been sent for by Lady Elizabeth, and described the state in which she found her; but Lady Waldegrave would scarcely hear her to an end. "Really this is too tiresome!" cried she impatiently. "Surely you might know mamma better than to pay any regard to such *scènes*; and if she *will* be ridiculous, it is surely better that she should be so in her own dressing-room than in the face of the whole world. Nothing will induce me to permit her to make such an exhibition. It might have passed at the Court of Louis Quatorze, when antiquated Venuses were quite *à la mode*; but in the present day such an outrage against good taste is not to be endured!"

Edith gave a gentle assent as to the impropriety of the exhibition, then, as delicately as she could, conveyed Lady Elizabeth's message; and added, "that surely something might be done to deprecate her displeasure and conciliate her."

"Oh, after the thing is over it will be time enough to do that," replied her Ladyship carelessly.

"But Lady Elizabeth declares she is determined to go abroad immediately, unless you make some concession to her," said Edith.

"That is perhaps the very best thing she can do," replied Lady Waldegrave, in the same tone of indifference.

"But if she goes now, she leaves you in anger. Ah, Florinda, can you bear to live under a parent's displeasure? Will you not rather sacrifice the amusement which is the cause of this strife, relinquish your theatrical representation, and recall your mother to your house?"

"How ridiculous!" exclaimed Lady Waldegrave angrily. "I can scarcely suppose you serious in making such a proposal, and I really have no leisure at present for *persiflage*."

"Indeed I am serious," said Edith gravely.

"Pshaw, that must be all make-believe. I know you would make a good actress; so pray put off your bonnet, and I will introduce you to the ball-room, where my *corps de ballet* are now practising. Now, do dispense with all the lackadaisical, missyish can'ts and won'ts, and indeeds, and so forth, and I shall take them all for granted, for my moments are very precious."

Edith saw that all hopes of touching a heart so seared by selfishness and folly were vain. She therefore relinquished the attempt, and calmly but firmly assured Lady Waldegrave it would be in vain to urge her to take a part in any theatrical representation. Lady Waldegrave coloured with displeasure as she said, "Yet you can obstinately refuse to gratify me in so trifling a matter, while you expect I should sacrifice

my own amusement, and that of my friends, for the unreasonable whim of another?"

"It is *duty* that makes the difference," said Edith gently.

"Rather our opinion of what our duties are," replied Lady Waldegrave. "I consider it my duty to make my house agreeable to my friends, and to prevent mamma from making herself ridiculous. I also think it my duty to learn my part, Lord Herbert," said she, addressing the intended lover of the piece.

"And it is mine to see that you get it by heart—is it not?" said he with a smile.

Edith rose to take leave, and, as she quitted the room, felt it a relief to return even to Lady Elizabeth and her cottage.

The unsuccessful result of her embassy called forth a fresh burst of indignation from Lady Elizabeth, which was still further increased when, upon demanding her car, doves, and wings, Edith was obliged to confess she had wholly forgotten to inquire into their fate. Another messenger was immediately despatched, with orders not to return without them, as, with the true spirit of a little, vindictive mind, she seemed wretched at the idea of any one else profiting by her misfortunes. In the prospect of disappointing any such design, she became more reconciled to her own discomfiture, and at length seemed to experience positive pleasure in the thoughts of the consternation that she flattered herself her sudden flight would occasion.

"And now we must talk of our arrangements," said she ; "I have ordered my people to have everything ready to set off to-morrow. I am sorry, my dear, I must leave you behind, as I really cannot take you comfortably with me ; besides, girls are rather an incumbrance abroad ; but when I am settled myself, I shall not forget you. I shall endeavour to find *un bon parti* for you, and I think I shall succeed ; but should I fail in that, you know you have always the resource of a convent, where you will have the very best society, so much better than living with *bourgeois* relations. In the meantime you must remain with me till I take my departure, for I have a thousand matters to arrange."

CHAPTER XLV.

As Lady Elizabeth's night was day, and her day night, Edith had the undisturbed enjoyment of the morning to herself. She therefore availed herself of the opportunity of collecting the drawings and papers which she had previously left at the Cottage, and was so employed when Mr. Melcombe was announced. Her writing-case and *portefeuille* were open before her, and part of their contents were scattered promiscuously on the table at which she was seated. She rose to receive him, but there was something of mutual constraint and embarrassment in the meeting. After the usual commonplace salutations and inquiries had been exchanged, Mr. Melcombe said, as if to deprecate her coldness, "I fear I have been guilty of an intrusion at this early hour; but if I have, you must forgive me."

"Why should you fear, and why *must* I forgive you?" inquired Edith, with a smile.

"Because, when there is much to hope, there is always something to fear."

"There is little room for either in this case," replied Edith slightly.

"It is only indifference that would exclude hope or fear," said he, looking earnestly at her.

"From anything so indifferent in its nature as a morning visit they surely may be excluded," answered Edith; "though I believe we are all apt to expend our hopes and fears even in the issue of 'to be—or not to be' at home."

"The issue of even so trifling an event may, however, be important." He paused, then added, "But even if I should have trespassed, I think you will forgive me when I tell you the offence is not likely to be soon repeated; and when next we meet, I trust I shall be in different circumstances from those in which you have hitherto known me."

His voice betrayed his emotion, and Edith was immediately struck with the thought that he alluded to his marriage with the object of his early affection. A strange sensation oppressed her. It might be that the difference of her own fate struck her forcibly when contrasted with the more favoured destiny of another. Yet, was he indeed true to his early vows, or had she been unconsciously supplanting another? Her heart shrank within her at the dread surmise. Alternately her cheek glowed with shame at the idea that she was the self-deluded sport of an imaginary attachment, and turned pale at the thought that perfidy and falsehood could dwell in such a mind. All this was the work of a moment, but she remained silent for some minutes; then, making an effort to regain her self-possession, she said, "It is seldom that

after a long separation people meet under the same circumstances : the change in yours, I trust, will be a happy one."

"Yes, the change that will restore an unknown exile to his family and country must be a happy one," said he, in a voice faltering with emotion. "That will entitle him to do what, as a friendless unknown adventurer, he dares not,—to seek the regard of one long and truly and fondly loved."

There was no mistaking the tone and the look which accompanied the words ; these declared the secrets of a heart too noble for dissimulation. Yet Edith strove to repel the thought that she could be the object of his love ; and while a deep blush mantled her cheek, she said, "Is she, then, not aware of the constancy of your attachment ?"

"Now I hope she is," replied he ; "and that even in absence, and under doubts and suspicions, she will believe that a time will come when all will be cleared up. Would she be wrong in granting me this much of hope ?"

"I cannot tell," said Edith faintly ; and she would have withdrawn the hand he had taken.

"Ah, do not say so !" cried he earnestly, as he still retained it.

"I cannot judge for another," said Edith, in increasing confusion.

"No, not for another—for yourself !"

"And she so long and truly loved ?" said Edith, in tones scarcely audible.

"It is she whom I now ask only to believe that one day I may aspire to her regard, when the mystery which now excludes me from her sympathy is disclosed. Is this asking too much?" he said, in deep agitation.

"No," said Edith, in a low, faltering voice.

"That is enough," he exclaimed, as a glow of pleasure lighted up his countenance. "In the midst of dear, approving friends, then, you will acknowledge me!"

On the table which stood before them some drawings lay scattered ; and as Edith, in confusion, turned her eyes from the deep, earnest gaze which was fixed upon her, they fell upon a view of Inch Orran by sunset —the parting gift of Lucy. Beneath were written these words from Ossian—

" My soul is full of other times ;
The joy of my youth returns."

"There," said she, in emotion, "is the dear home where, ere long, I hope to be."

"Inch Orran!" exclaimed Melcombe, in a tone that thrilled to her heart. She started, and turned upon him a look of anxious inquiry, but his eyes were fixed on the drawing. Why should the simple pronouncing of a name conjure up visions of the past? Why should a tone—the tone of a stranger's voice—thus suddenly recall the past, the lost, the loved of other times to him unknown? These feelings were depicted on Edith's countenance as she continued to gaze in breathless suspense.

Struck with her paleness, and the intense interest expressed in her countenance, he seemed suddenly to recollect himself, and said, with assumed calmness, "That scene, once viewed, can never be forgotten. It was on such an evening I last beheld it," added he ; and his voice quivered as he spoke, while his eyes were again riveted on the drawing. With an impulse for which she could not account, Edith took from her writing-box a miniature of Mrs. Malcolm ; it had been painted soon after Ronald's departure, and had been destined for him ; but subsequent events had defeated the intention, and the picture had been given to her. She now, with a feeling for which she could not have found a name, with a trembling hand placed the picture before him, while she said, "There is the picture of the only mother I ever knew. Was she too known to you ?"

For a moment he gazed upon it with a look of the most passionate fondness ; tears filled his eyes, but still he continued to gaze. Then shading his brow with his hand, as if to conceal his weakness, the tears forced their way through the fingers, vainly spread to hide them. Struggling to repress emotions too powerful to be restrained, he leant his head on the table, while his whole frame betrayed the agitation of his mind, and spoke those voiceless feelings with which his heart seemed panting.

As Edith beheld this overpowering emotion, a thousand wild, vague, bewildering fancies floated through her brain ; looks and tones and words that told of the lost, the dead, came thronging upon her

in a strange confusion, mingling with the present, the living——. Stronger and stronger, the visions crowded on her brain ; she felt as if reason was forsaking her. With the paleness of death on her brow, and eyes which seemed as if bursting from their sockets, she started up, and exclaimed, “Who—oh ! in mercy tell me—who——” Her gaze was fixed on him with an expression of fearful scrutiny ; but her pale lips were unable to utter more. Her lover’s agitation was almost equal to her own ; words seemed to be struggling for utterance, while yet by a mighty effort he restrained them. At length, in a voice of deep, yet subdued emotion, he said, “Edith, I have not deceived you—can you trust me ?”

“Oh, you know not what you are doing !” she exclaimed, as she withdrew her hands wildly from his ; “you know not the dark, the wild, the *impossible* things I fancy,” and she gasped as she spoke, and drew shuddering away.

“Edith, dearest, Edith, believe—only believe that I am true, and that nothing is impossible !”

“What ! not that the seas should give up their dead ?” cried she frantically.

“Not their dead ! But, Edith, do not—oh, do not tempt me thus to break a vow, rashly—perhaps impiously—taken, but which I hold sacred ; in a little while, a few short months, the time will come ; dearest—most beloved—my first, my only love—say that you will yet trust me, and then—and then let us part !”

For some minutes Edith could not speak, but at length, restored to composure by the anguish which clouded his brow, she faintly articulated, "I will!—I do!"

"At Inch Orran, then, let us meet. There let me find you—there let me claim you."

Edith faintly breathed a single word—a name which had ever lain cherished in her heart.

"Yours, and only yours, dearest Edith, by whatever name ; to all else—dead—forgotten—"

"Oh, not forgotten," cried Edith, bursting into tears ; "still—still loved and mourned !—"

"Edith, I conjure you, tempt me not; make not the error of my youth to bring down perjury and dis-honour upon me now; you have said you would trust me—may I not trust you ?"

In a moment Edith conquered her tremors—her tears were arrested in their course—she did not speak; but the look with which she gave him her hand needed not words to attest her resolution. Melcombe pressed it to his lips, and tore himself away.

CHAPTER XLVI.

How like a dream, a vision of the night, did this brief and passing scene appear to Edith ! Again and again she asked herself, Could it be that the lost, the lamented, had thus, as it were, started into life ; that the loved companion of her childish days was now the chosen of her matured affections ? And these affections, had they been lightly transferred ? Could affections, once so blighted as hers had been, ever again revive, and own a second spring ? Was it indeed love that she now owned and felt ? Oh, how different from that which had cast its dazzling and delusive glare over her young imagination, and tinged so many of the radiant years of youth with colours fair, 'tis true, but fading as the tints of the rainbow !

Love had formerly been a sentiment,—a false, narrow, exclusive sentiment,—shared only by the object which inspired it ; now, it was a noble, generous, diffusive principle, which glowed in her heart, and sought to impart a portion of its own blessedness around. She had loved Reginald as she could have loved anything that fancy had painted to her as fair and fascinating. She had invested him with every

noble and generous attribute which the young and imaginative so lavishly bestow on those they love. But the illusion had long since been dispelled, never again to gather over her heart. Again she loved, but by a light which could not deceive,—by that divine light which taught her not to love the mere perishing idol of life's passing hour, but the immortal being, with whose soul her own might joy to claim kindred throughout eternity. And the dear ones who still mourned his loss—oh, theirs would be rapture almost to agony! But she dared not allow her thoughts to dwell on such a theme.

It was long ere her spirits were sufficiently tranquillised to admit of her returning to the frivolous being with whom she was still associated, but from whom she was soon to part, most probably for ever. With her own heart overflowing with love and gratitude to the Divine Disposer of events, fain would she have sought to impart to another of His creatures a portion of that heavenly-mindedness which was the fountain of her own happiness. But Lady Elizabeth rejected with horror, as something that savoured of Methodism and enthusiasm, the slightest allusion to anything of a sacred nature when spoken out of church, and preferred the indulgence of her own disturbed fancy—as it painted to her pleasures and triumphs that might have been hers—to all the peculiar treasures of wisdom and peace which could be offered to her.

The day was far advanced ere she made her ap-

pearance, if possible, in increased ill-humour. As she dawdled over her *déjeuner à la fourchette*, suddenly the sound of horses' feet at full speed was heard advancing; and as Edith raised her eyes she caught a glimpse of one of Lady Waldegrave's grooms, as he galloped past the window, his horse in a foam. He stopped at the principal entrance, and presently a loud, unsteady, ominous-sounding knock was heard at the hall door.

"Who—what is that?" cried Lady Elizabeth.

"I think it is a messenger from Woodlands," said Edith.

"Ah! but he comes too late. I will listen to no apology now—the time is past." And at that moment the butler entered with consternation on his face.

"An express from Woodlands, my lady."

"Well, what then?" demanded his lady peevishly.

"Sir Reginald has been badly hurt, my lady."

"Badly hurt!" repeated she, much in the same tone.

"Yes, my lady—wounded."

"Wounded! How very unpleasant—how was it—where? Edith, do you hear that?" Edith did hear, but, pale and panic-struck, she was unable to articulate.

"The ball has not been extracted, my lady."

"A ball! Good Heaven, how shocking! I am quite overcome! How dreadful! Do call Monsieur Lamotte. I shall certainly faint!"

"Lady Waldegrave is in great distress, my lady."

Edith waited to hear no more, but, quitting the apartment as Monsieur Lamotte entered, she

hastened to find the servant, and learn from himself what had actually taken place ; but the man seemed too much stunned and surprised to be able to give a clear account of what had happened. What he did relate, however, was sufficiently tragical and appalling. Sir Reginald had fought that morning with Lord Herbert, and been brought home severely wounded. The report of his death had circulated among his creditors, and executions were already in the house. Lady Waldegrave was in fits, and left almost alone, the party having dispersed.

Such was the amount of the intelligence with which Edith returned to the breakfast-table.

“This is too shocking—much too shocking !” exclaimed Lady Elizabeth, in one of her hysterical tremors. “What is to be done ?”

“Had we not best go to Woodlands immediately ?” replied Edith, who, though trembling with horror, remained calm and collected.

“Why, yes—perhaps so ; and yet what *can* I do now ? Had I been in the house, as I ought to have been, it would have been very different ; but now I can do nothing—the time is past —”

“Oh no ; do not say so,” cried Edith ; “this is the time to be of use to Lady Waldegrave, now when she is in affliction. Oh, surely you will go to her !”

“Why, considering how I have been treated,” said her Ladyship with asperity.

“Ah, do not think of that at such a time,” interrupted Edith, with emotion.

"It is the most inconvenient time for me that could possibly be!" replied her Ladyship sharply. "At the very moment when I was setting off—my nerves so shook, too, with what has passed! How in the world did it happen?"

"I cannot tell," cried Edith; "I only know Sir Reginald has fought, and been wounded, perhaps dying," added she, bursting into tears.

"Shocking and foolish!—'tis too much. And an execution in the house!—that surely might have been prevented?"

"Let us still try what may be done. Oh, let us hasten to Woodlands!"

"Have patience, child! How is it possible for me, situated as I am? And what am I to do after I am there?"

"Then suffer me to go—allow me to order the carriage."

"Why, that is certainly very inconvenient for me; but, however, I suppose I must give up thoughts of going to-day,—at least I shall not decide upon anything till you return. So pray make haste. Tell Florinda how excessively I have been shocked. And by-the-bye, I shall send my physician to poor Sir Reginald; Monsieur Lamotte will accompany you."

But Edith had learnt from the servant that there was abundance of medical assistance already provided; she therefore declined the attendance of Monsieur Lamotte, and the carriage having been quickly got ready, she threw herself into it—every consideration

absorbed in generous sympathy for those she was so earnest to befriend.

How changed was the scene that awaited her at Woodlands from that which she had witnessed not many hours before ! Then all had been sunshine and gaiety and melody ; now the day was chill and dull ; the velvet lawn and beauteous flower-beds were already defaced and trodden down ; carts were loading in front of the house ; the broad flight of steps was strewed with every description of furniture and valuables ; the beautiful vases, filled with the choicest exotics, had been overturned or broken in pieces, and their fragments lay mingled with the cherished plants that had graced them ; grim, scowling, hardened-looking men were pushing and swearing at one another, as they each laid claim to some article of value, and their loud execrations and tumultuous din were still worse than the silent mementoes of ruin which lay scattered around. The hall, lately filled with the fairest works of Italy, now presented a similar scene of devastation. The public rooms were fast dismantling ; Lady Waldegrave's *suite* had already been despoiled of its treasures. Shuddering at this painful spectacle, Edith, after some delay, got one of the housemaids to conduct her to Lady Waldegrave. As she passed along, she met one of the surgeons coming from Sir Reginald's apartment, and she was relieved to hear from him that the wound was not considered dangerous ; that the ball, which had entered the fleshy part of the shoulder, had been safely

extracted. The only danger now to be dreaded was from the agitation of mind occasioned by the distressing scenes that were passing, and which it was impossible wholly to conceal from his knowledge. With a heart lightened of half its cares for the wretched fate of one who had been so dear to her, Edith followed her guide, shuddering with horror at the scenes of ferocious pillage she everywhere encountered. At length, in a chamber in the attics, she found the refuge of the hapless mistress of all this splendid ruin !

Lady Waldegrave was extended on the bed, perfectly calm, as if from exhaustion, but with misery and despair impressed on every feature. On Edith's entrance she half opened her eyes, but immediately closed them, as if determined neither to notice nor be noticed. Edith, however, approached the bed, and, taking the hand which lay almost powerless by her, pressed it in hers ; still Lady Waldegrave remained immovable.

Edith was silent for some minutes. At length she said, "I have come on Lady Elizabeth's account as well as my own ; she charged me to express to you her sorrow on this occasion." Lady Waldegrave made no reply. "She will come to you, I am sure, if you wish it," resumed Edith ; but she received no answer. "In the meantime, if I can be of any service to you——"

"Oh, those horrid sounds !" exclaimed Lady Waldegrave, shrieking, and burying her face in her pillow, as a volley of abuse and imprecations ascended from

beneath her window. "Will no one save me from this?" and wild hysterical sobs shook her frame.

"I fear it is impossible," said Edith soothingly; "distressing as it is, do try to bear it!"

"Is there nobody to assist me?—nobody to drive away these people—these robbers?—they have seized even my jewels!" she exclaimed, casting her eyes up to Heaven, as if in appeal.

"This is indeed a trial, painful for you to endure," said Edith, in the same gentle tone; "but, distressing as it is, there is still comfort in the midst of it; what a consolation to know that Sir Reginald's wound is not dangerous!" Lady Waldegrave waved her head with a gesture of impatience. "Ah, Florinda, think what it might have been to himself, what he might have inflicted on another, and thank God it is no worse!"

"He could have done nothing worse than he has done," exclaimed she passionately; "he has been the ruin of my happiness, of my fortune, of my reputation—his very name is my abhorrence!"

Edith's blood ran cold. "Oh, Florinda, in mercy do not talk thus! Remember he is your husband—the father of your child!"

"And has been the ruin of myself and my child by his madness—but do not mention him."

Edith feared there was guilt, no less than folly, in the case, or at least imprudence bordering upon guilt; and she said in a faltering voice, "I am ignorant of the cause of this unhappy *rencontre*."

Lady Waldegrave's colour rose. "Then 'tis well

you should remain so.—But no, that cannot be ; you will hear a thousand lies, and you will perhaps believe them all, as some other of my friends have done, and like them you will desert me in the time of need.”

“No,” said Edith ; “happen what may, I will not desert you in your present situation.”

Again Lady Waldegrave’s colour deepened, while, with a rising at her throat, she said, “What ! not even if you should be told that my husband fought to avenge his honour ?”

Edith became pale as death, and for some minutes she was unable to articulate. At length, in a low voice of deep emotion, she said, “Not even then could I forsake you in the hour of need.”

For a moment Lady Waldegrave appeared slightly touched, then in increasing confusion she went on : “The world had chosen to give me Lord Herbert as a lover. I need not tell you who know me, and had opportunities of judging for yourself, that it was a mere idle or malicious rumour, such as are circulated in thousands every day, and which nobody pays any regard to ; but having drunk too much wine, or lost too much money, or, in short, I cannot tell how—but in a moment of delirium Sir Reginald thought proper to become jealous, and to insult Lord Herbert ; the consequence was, it was necessary they should go out this morning ; judge, then, whether I have not cause of resentment ?”

“I cannot judge,” said Edith faintly ; “God only can judge ; but if you are innocent”—

"Can you doubt it?" interrupted Lady Waldegrave indignantly.

"At least there must have been imprudence to justify the suspicion of guilt," said Edith.

"I am no hypocrite—I never studied appearances."

"Then, since conscious of your innocence, you can more easily forgive Sir Reginald if the imprudence has been his," said Edith.

"You know not what I have to forgive!" cried Lady Waldegrave passionately. "When brought home, even in presence of my servants he ordered me from his sight. Can I forgive such an insult as that?"

"Forgive all, as you hope to be forgiven," said Edith.

"Do not talk to me any more of this horrid affair, for Heaven's sake; but tell me what I shall do—how I shall get away from these dreadful scenes."

"Sir Reginald cannot be removed," said Edith; "surely then you will not leave the house while he is in it?"

"To what purpose should I remain?" cried Lady Waldegrave impatiently.

"To be near him," replied Edith.

"What! after having suffered so great an indignity?"

"Yes, assuredly; he must have suffered, he is still suffering, much on your account; his state must still be precarious——"

"Pshaw—nonsense; the wound is a mere nothing—Dr. Smith told me so himself."

"But the agitation of his mind may render it dangerous ; should it prove so (as who can tell ?), and if, in the prospect of danger, he should wish to see you once more, to exchange forgiveness—ah, Florinda, could you ever forgive yourself if you had forsaken your husband's dying bed ?"

"But how is it possible for me to remain in this wretched state ?" she exclaimed, giving way to a violent burst of selfish sorrow as she cast her eyes around the room.

"This apartment is quite comfortable," said Edith ; "and if you will allow me, I will share it with you while you remain. But, oh ! do not think of quitting the house while your husband is in it. If, as you say, your reputation is at stake, surely even on that account you are better here than you could be elsewhere."

That consideration seemed to have some weight, and at length Edith prevailed. She therefore sent back the carriage to Lady Elizabeth, with a note to prepare her for what she had to encounter, and a request that she would lose no time in coming to her daughter ; then, with all the ardour and sweetness of Christian charity, she devoted herself to the task she had undertaken, of supporting the wretched being thus thrown upon her compassion.

CHAPTER XLVII.

ALTHOUGH Lady Waldegrave had expressed a wish that her mother should come to her, yet no sooner did she hear of her arrival than it was apparent it had only been for the sake of appearances she had desired her presence. "For Heaven's sake, do not suffer mamma to talk to me," cried she to Edith; "it will kill me if she does; I cannot be tortured with questions; I shall go distracted if she talks of what has passed."

But the duel, its causes and consequences, had made slight impression on Lady Elizabeth's mind, in comparison of the execution and its effects; these, together with her own injuries and distresses, affected her so much that some time elapsed before she was sufficiently composed to be conducted to her daughter. For some time sobs and broken exclamations were all the conversation.

"My poor, dear Florinda!" exclaimed she, in hysterical emotion. "Good Heavens! how shocking! But you know I told you, you certainly would be punished for your undutiful behaviour towards me. Not that I blamed you, my sweetest. And all those

charming pictures and marbles—shocking ! And that mosaic-table, which I *did* covet—it quite kills me to think of it. I foresaw this marriage would be your ruin, my darling ; but we won't talk of it. How sadly you must have been shook by all this ! Dr. Smith assures me a wound in the shoulder is nothing ; but you look very ill yourself, my dear, quite *abimée* ; and I have had a wretched night. Only conceive how very inconvenient—such a *contretemps* ! Everything was packed up, and, in fact, I was just setting off for the Continent when I received the provoking intelligence ; but I have put off my departure for a few days, that I may see you tolerably comfortable before I go. I am happy you have got dear, good Edith ; she will, I am sure, do everything for you. But it is dreadful remaining here. Surely, my dear, you will leave this dreadful place ? ”

“ I know not where to go,” said Lady Waldegrave despairingly.

“ How foolish, my dear, to talk so ! Can't you go to town ? ”

“ And find things worse, if possible, than even here,” replied Lady Waldegrave in the same tone.

“ Shocking ! Well, go anywhere ; to an hotel—to—to—in short, you can be at no loss ; but, *à propos*, what was the cause of that horrid affair ? —how was it ? Lord Herbert is the best-natured man in the world.”

“ Some foolish quarrel about anything, or nothing,” cried Lady Waldegrave. “ But pray, mamma, don't

remain in this scene of horrors ; it makes me wretched to see you—it does, indeed."

"'Tis indeed very sad, and Monsieur Lamotte was quite opposed to my coming ; but I said I was determined, whatever it might cost, to make a point of seeing you. I knew it would do you good, and that I should feel more comfortable ; for, you know, there are such absurd things said upon these occasions. My maid told me this morning the talk in the neighbourhood was, that you had actually gone off with Lord Herbert—shocking and foolish ! that Sir Reginald had pursued you, and fought ; and, in short, I can't tell you what ridiculous things are said ; but it is quite a comfort to me to see you so well, although you do look pale. But surely those odious people will be obliged to replace everything ? And, *à propos*, they can have no right whatever to my car and doves, and I assure you those wings cost me a great deal of money. How kind in Lady Heywood to take poor Dudley out of the way!"

In this manner she continued to babble on till she took her departure, with a promise of returning the following day. But in the interim she had caught cold by her visit to Woodlands, she said, which kept her at home ; and Lady Waldegrave was seized with a nervous, feverish attack, which confined her to bed. Slighted and neglected by the few attendants who remained, it was Edith's part to nurse and tend her, which she did day and night with the most unremitting care and tenderness.

Florinda received many pretty little pink and blue billets from dear friends in town, who were dying to hear of her, and some even left cards of inquiry in the course of their morning's airing ; but not one came to offer personal aid or sympathy. Lady Elizabeth seemed to think she had amply discharged her maternal duties by a single visit ; for the next account of her was, that she had set off for Paris, where she said she would expect to hear from dear Florinda before proceeding to Rome, where it was absolutely necessary she should winter.

Admiral and Lady Arabella Conway had been kindly attentive, and done all in their power to promote the comfort of the wretched pair, thus thrown for the present on the resources of their friends. They were not ignorant of the rumours that were afloat concerning the cause of the duel ; and without pretending to form a judgment one way or other, they had from the first agreed with Edith on the propriety of Lady Waldegrave remaining where she was. She seemed now on the brink of a precipice, and a single false step might plunge her in irretrievable ruin. She had also abated much of the high tone which she had at first assumed, and it was evident she was willing to submit to at least the appearance of a reconciliation.

During this period Sir Reginald had been making rapid progress towards recovery, as was learnt from his medical attendants, for neither by word nor deed had he taken the slightest notice of Lady Waldegrave. The time was now come, however, when some explana-

tion must take place. He had been able for the first time to be moved into the study adjoining his dressing-room, and having stood that trial, he had declared his determination of being removed to town the following day. On receiving this information Florinda appeared overwhelmed with surprise and mortification. It was evident from this that it was Sir Reginald's intention to abandon her—to leave her destitute, friendless—almost penniless—with a stain upon her reputation which this desertion would render for ever indelible. In the tumult of her feelings she wrote to him, but her letter was returned in a blank cover, unopened. When the first burst of passionate indignation at this insult had subsided, she besought Edith to see him, and learn from himself what his intentions were; to represent to him the sacrifice she had made in refusing to quit the house while he remained in it; and, finally, that it was the opinion of her family and friends that no separation ought to take place at present. No office could be more revolting to Edith's feelings than the one she was thus called on to undertake—and by whom? By her who had so cruelly supplanted her in those affections which had once been her all. Was it indeed possible she was called upon to go a suppliant for favour to her now deserted rival? But Edith's pure and generous heart felt no base triumph at the thought; no unhallowed gleam of pleasure shone in her sad but pitying eyes as she beheld the wretchedness of one who had wrought her so much woe!

Florinda's tears and entreaties prevailed over Edith's better judgment and finer feelings, and she sent to request an interview with Sir Reginald. Only the purity and the rectitude of her intentions could have justified to herself the step she was now taking in thus interfering between those bound by so near and holy a tie—a tie which, when once burst asunder, can never be hallowed and blest again !

It was with such painful and embarrassing feelings that Edith entered the apartment where Sir Reginald lay reclining on a sofa, pale and emaciated, with the languor of sickness and sorrow diffused over his form and features. He rose to receive her, his wounded arm suspended in a sling ; and as he extended his hand to her, she shuddered as she thought how recently that hand had been uplifted to take away the life of another ! Both were deeply affected, and for some minutes neither spoke. At length, making an effort, he said, "This is a kind visit, Edith, if I cannot say more—" His voice faltered, and he stopped.

"Do not say anything on that subject," replied Edith gently ; "it is enough that you believe it is kindly meant."

Sir Reginald pointed to an open letter which lay on the table before him ; and, while wounded pride seemed to struggle with better feeling, he said, "Do you know from whence this came ? Is it from Admiral Conway ?"

Edith took the paper, on which was simply

written, "A loan from an old friend." It contained bills to the amount of five hundred pounds; and, even through the attempted disguise of the hand, she recognised, with an emotion of surprise and pleasure, the writing of Mr. Melcombe. "I am certain it is not from Admiral Conway," she said; "but there is a subject of greater interest I would speak to you of—"

"I am aware of all you have done," said Sir Reginald, "and I know you can mean nothing that is not good; but," added he, in increasing agitation, "the best intentions may be mistaken—they who mean well may be misled."

Edith hesitated to proceed, as she perceived him already prepared to deprecate the introduction of the subject on which she had come, and she remained silent and irresolute.

In a few minutes Sir Reginald, with more firmness, said, "There is one subject, Edith, and only one, which I would not have you name to me—on any other say what you will."

"I will not affect to misunderstand you, Sir Reginald," said Edith; "there is a subject which you may well deem too delicate to be intruded upon. I feel it is so, and fain, very fain, I would be spared—"

"I believe you," replied Sir Reginald bitterly; "the task is not one fitted for you."

"But I have undertaken it," said Edith faintly.

"But you know not—you could not know—what

it was you had undertaken ; it has been imposed upon you by another."

"Be it so," said Edith soothingly. "Can you blame that wife who would try every method to be reconciled to her husband ?"

The cloud still deepened on Sir Reginald's brow as he said, "Yes, I blame the wife who, conscious of her own unworthiness, could stain the purity of another by employing her to plead her cause."

"Then see and hear her plead her own cause," said Edith earnestly, and with a deepening colour.

"Neither, and *never!*" answered Sir Reginald sternly.

"Oh, in mercy say not so!—That is a fearful word ; as you hope to be forgiven yourself, forgive her. Erring and imprudent she admits she has been, but in the face of Heaven, she attests her innocence." She paused, but Sir Reginald made no reply ; she trusted that he was relenting, and went on : "Surely then you will not visit her errors thus harshly ; you will not cast from you the being you vowed to love and protect. She is in sickness—in sorrow—your own Florinda ! the mother of your boy ! Ah, Reginald, surely you will not thus abandon her ?"

"'Tis in vain !" answered Sir Reginald, with a convulsive gasp, and shading his face with his hand.

"Think how you once loved her !" said Edith imploringly.

"You know how I did !" he replied in a tone so

deep and stern as thrilled to Edith's heart. Tears rose to her eyes—she felt she could say no more.

Sir Reginald made another effort to regain his firmness, but his voice still faltered, when he said, "This is perhaps the only request I could have refused you ; but I do refuse it ; my happiness has been sacrificed, my confidence has been for ever destroyed, and 'tis in vain to strive to renew it." He paused, then resumed in a firm and decided tone, "When I go to town, arrangements shall be immediately made for a final separation. All that can be done for her comfort shall be done on my part. Now, God bless you, Edith. Will you not say as much for me ?"

"Ah, Reginald," said Edith, as the tears dropped upon the hand which held hers, "the blessings which I would ask for you of God are those which you would reject ; but I do ask of Him," added she with fervour, "to bless you with the knowledge of Himself." They pressed each other's hands in silence, and parted—for ever !

There was more of indignation than sorrow in Lady Waldegrave's emotion when made acquainted with her husband's determination. The same day (having received a remittance from Sir Reginald) she set off for Paris to join Lady Elizabeth ; and Edith returned to her dear friends at Oakley House, to await the arrival of the Ribleys.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

THE autumn was now far advanced ; and even amid the pomp of groves and garniture of fields Edith sighed as she thought of that glorious effulgence which, at this season more especially, would be lighting up her own mountain land !—of those setting suns, not, as in softer climes, sinking gently and imperceptibly to rest, but retiring in the full majesty of a splendid retinue of gorgeous clouds, and even with their last rays imparting new beauty to the purple mountain, the green wave, and the gray rock. And oh ! what thick-coming fancies, what visions of even earthly joy, were now associated in her mind with the thoughts of her Highland home !

The Admiral and Lady Arabella were aware of the attachment which had been formed between her and Melcombe ; but they felt satisfied when they also learnt that it was when she should be in the midst of her nearest and dearest friends he was to return to claim her, and from their hands that he was to receive her. After repeated delays the Ribleys at length arrived ; and Edith, to the mutual regret of herself and her kind friends, bade them adieu, and returned

once more to the Grove and the Mall. The delays had been occasioned by Mrs. Ribley's illness ; she had had several bilious attacks, and was still evidently far from being convalescent. She nevertheless relaxed nothing of her minute observances, but pursued her course of small, dull, frivolous occupations with unabated rigour.

" Been very near losing Kitty my dear !" said Mr. Ribley to Edith, with a shake of the head. " Sad thing, if I had lost Kitty my dear—eh ?"

" You are very good, Mr. Ribley," said his lady gravely ; " and it did occur to me that, should you have been deprived of me, probably your best plan would have been, at a proper period, to have paid your addresses to our tried and excellent friend, Mrs. Rose Popkin."

" Sure, my dear, if I didn't think the very same thing ! Nice little woman is Mrs. Rose—pretty fortune of her own ; and, sure, my dear, if it hadn't been for her the water souchey would have been quite spoiled ! "

Mrs. Macauley had made many attempts to be permitted to return to her cottage, but in vain ; all her efforts to extricate herself from Johnnie and his small people were fruitless. They had, one and all of them, discovered her value ; and, while she remained within their reach, it was evident she would never be suffered to rest. Edith had gone to visit her as often as it was in her power, and had found her the inmate of a small, crowded, noisy dwelling, beset with spoiled,

sickly children, hanging round her, clinging to her, leaning and sitting upon her in all directions. The effect of all this was beginning to be visible upon her ; her neat, straight back seemed bending, as if more from the weight of children than of years ; her cheeks were drawn down, as if by the constant stroking of fond hands ; her bright, sunny eyes looked red and heavy, as if from want of sleep ; and she said she thought she was getting a little deaf ; but, maybe, it was only the din of the bairns, poor things ! Altogether, she had got what Mrs. Johnnie, in her dialect, called "a puled look." Edith, grieved to behold the ravages committed upon her dear old friend by the concentrated affection of a whole family, prevailed so far as to have her brought to the cottage for a week or two previous to the time when the Ribleys were to remove to town.

"Oh, my dear !" said she to Edith, as, the first day of her return, she sat in the little garden, basking in the mild rays of an autumnal sun,—"this is a cordial to my heart ! and how thankful I ought to be —though I am not just so stout as I was—that I'm permitted to sit at my ease here, with all my senses about me ! and, for as old as I am, to be able to watch the sun going down, and to smell the flowers, and to hear the birds sing. 'Deed, that sweet robin redbreast puts me in mind of what I once read in an old book about it. And you know—though I'm no great reader—I never forget what I do read, which is a great mercy. 'As oft,' says he, 'as I hear the

robin redbreast chaunt it as cheerfully in September, the beginning of winter, as in March, the approach of the summer, why should not we give as cheerful entertainment to the hoary, frosty hairs of our age's winter, as to the primroses of our youth's spring? I am sent to the ant to learne industry; to the dove, to learne innocence; to the serpent, to learne wisdome; and why not to this bird, to learne patience and cheerfulness?" But oh! my dear, where am I to go to learn something more particular of that fine creature that has gone away and left us? Not a bit if I'm any wiser than I was about him! But you know who I mean, my darling, or your cheeks would not turn so red."

"Dear Macky! you will learn all in time; he will meet us at Inch Orran, when—" Edith could not proceed—emotion choked her utterance—she could only press her old friends hands in silence, as she laid her head on her shoulder to hide the tears which were swimming in her eyes.

Mrs. Macauley understood what was implied in this agitation, and she exclaimed in rapture, "'Deed then, and it gives me new heart to hear it, and I'll bide my time patiently! Did not I always tell you he would turn out well? Not a bit I would wonder if he was to turn out a Malcolm after all!"

In blissful anticipations of the great, though vague and shapeless things that were awaiting Glenroy's daughter, Mrs. Macauley soon regained her usual health and animation. When the time arrived for

the Ribleys' removal to town, she again resumed her place in Johnnie's family; but the period of her sojourn was to be short, as the winter was now advancing, and early in spring Captain Malcolm was to come in person to convey them once more to Inch Orran. Meanwhile, they both devoted themselves to the duties that had devolved upon them. There was at least more of variety and animation in Mrs. Macauley's life than in Edith's; for her sole employment was to bear Mrs. Ribley company in her own apartment, to which she was chiefly confined. Certainly, if unfitness of minds in those who are condemned to associate closely together be a species of torture (as doubtless it is), Edith was sorely tried, but she bore it not only patiently, but cheerfully; insomuch that even Mrs. Ribley's cold nature seemed thawing into something that could not be called affection, but was decided approbation.

Her health, however, now began to improve, and at length she was so much recovered, that Edith was permitted to spend a week or two occasionally with Lady Arabella, who seemed to have no fears of the contamination of the City communicating itself to Grosvenor Square.

At this time Edith received a letter from Lady Elizabeth from Rome, written in her usual style. The purport of it was, in the first place, to let her know that she had quarrelled with her daughter, who had gone to reside at Naples, and that she herself, feeling the want of a protector, was about to

bestow her hand upon the Principe Pompolino, a very charming, talented person, though possessed of no fortune, and not particularly handsome. Some time or another she hoped to make him known to dear Edith, who, she was sure, would admire him excessively.

Edith recollected having heard her mention this same Principe more than once as a frightful, tiresome little wretch, full of pretension, who was said to have married his first wife for her fortune, and then starved and beat her to death. Shocking and foolish! So much for the pleasing prospect that had allured to him a second. Edith felt really distressed at the folly of the infatuated old woman, and thought what emblems she and her daughter presented of the weak and beggarly elements of mere worldly advantages. As for Sir Reginald, he was living in Paris on the *débris* of his fortune, in a career of heartless, joyless amusement—still the slave of the world, even while he hated the chain which bound him to it.

From contemplations such as these it was a relief even to turn to Mr. Ribley's transports of astonishment, disappointment, delight, and what not, as he announced one day the news he had just received. "Why, now, what do you think? Only guess—sure you never would! Refused Miss Mogg! And now, what do you think? going to be married—going to be married to a lady of quality! Refused Miss Mogg, and going to be married to a duke's daughter!!! Why, now, only think of my being uncle-in-law to a

duke's daughter ! But, then, refused three hundred thousand pound ! Have it all in a letter from himself ! ” And he presented Edith with the letter he had received from Mr. Penshurst, containing the intelligence of his being the accepted lover of the Lady Mary Morden ; and concluding with a hope that his uncle would enable him to make such settlements as the lady's rank rendered requisite. “ Sure, now, Kitty, my dear, if he had but taken Miss Mogg, what a fortune there would have been ! Four hundred and fifty thousand pound ! How comfortable for old Mogg and me to have put our money together—wouldn't it, Kitty, my dear ? ”

“ It would, indeed, Mr. Ribley ; but we must expect to meet with disappointments occasionally.”

“ All his own fault ; but to think of his getting a duke's daughter—must settle handsomely upon her. Suppose we shall go to court, Kitty, my dear, eh ? and be presented to their Majesties upon the occasion —eh, Kitty, my dear ? Wonder what they will say to us ? ”

Edith was rejoiced to hear that Mr. Penshurst had got the better of his disappointment ; and having heard Lady Arabella mention the lady's family in favourable terms, she trusted the marriage would prove a happy one. Mr. Ribley soon became reconciled to the loss of Miss Mogg's fortune in the splendour of this alliance, although his sensibilities were again awakened to the reality of the loss, when he soon after read in the papers the marriage of the

Most Noble the Marquis of Carlingford to Charlotte Augusta Mogg, only child of Mark Mogg, Esquire, of Myrtle Grove. "Sure, now, to think how Charles could refuse Miss Mogg, and she a Marchioness ! Three hundred thousand pound, and a Marchioness ! And, Kitty, my dear, to think of old Mogg being a dowager Marchioness !!!"

CHAPTER XLIX.

IT was now the season when “the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land”—the season when Edith was to exchange the crowded streets and stifling atmosphere of London for the silent glens and free mountain air of her dear Highland home. Captain Malcolm came, and joyful was the meeting between him and his beloved *protégée*. Edith had much pleasure in introducing her dear and venerated guardian to her friends the Conways; and the liking which took place was reciprocal. They promised to pay a visit at Inch Orran in the course of the summer, “When I hope to dance a Highland reel at a Highland wedding,” whispered the Admiral, as he gave Edith a paternal embrace at parting. Mrs. Ribley took a more formal adieu, but her words, though few, were to the purpose.

“In consideration,” said she, “of the propriety with which you have conducted yourself while a member of this family, I think it proper to inform you that, in the event of my demise, I have, with Mr. Ribley’s concurrence, bequeathed to you one-half of

my fortune, at present vested in the Three per cent Consols."

"Good-bye, good-bye," said Mr. Ribley ; "better have stayed with us—won't find Birch's turtle-soup in the Highlands—perhaps find turtles of another sort—no green fat upon them, though—eh, Kitty, my dear?"

"Deed, I'm wae to leave this great world of brick and dust, after all," said Mrs. Macauley, as she wiped her eyes, and turned her back on London, "when I think on the bits of childer that were so fond of me, and them all greetin', poor things, at my going away. Oh, surely that's one of the mercies of Providence, that wherever we go we'll find something to love, and somebody to love us. Do not you think so, my dear? But I beg your pardon—I had forgot that I was not to speak of that till the time comes."

Captain Malcolm smiled as he perceived the blush which the simplicity of her old friend called up on Edith's cheek, and doubted not but the cause would soon be revealed to Mrs. Malcolm.

It was a joyous day when the little party arrived at Inch Orran. The bright sun, the silvery atmosphere, the blue waters, the tender green of the foliage just bursting from the bud; but far beyond all the loveliness of nature were the glad faces, the fond tones, and the warm embrace of long-separated friends. Much was there to say and to tell on both sides; but oh, how much more had Edith to conceal! Still, as she looked on the fair and happy band that

surrounded her, one place seemed empty ; still, amid all the loving looks that met hers, one look was wanting ; amid all the sweet gay tones that rang in her ear, the sweetest of all was silent. When the first joyful excitement had subsided, and affection had returned to the natural flow of calm, social intercourse, it was then Mrs. Malcolm remarked with surprise the change that had taken place in Edith's manner. Instead of the calm, serene air which had formerly characterised her, she had now an anxious and abstracted look ; or when roused from her reveries, it seemed only to agitation or embarrassment.

At times she appeared as if oppressed with a weight more than she could bear ; at others, a glow of pleasure would suddenly kindle on her cheek and sparkle in her eyes. Again her half-open lips seemed about to breathe the tale she longed to disclose ; but, as if recalled to sudden recollection, she would quickly fly from the social circle, and bury herself in solitude. Mrs. Malcolm knew her too well for a moment to suspect Edith could have any attachment she would blush to avow, and she waited patiently for some time in hopes she would disclose the mystery which seemed thus to be haunting her. But days passed on, and the symptoms of Edith's mental disquiet only became more striking. She seemed all eye and ear ; the sight of a distant boat, the sound of a horse's feet, the entrance of a passing visitor,—all startled and agitated her, as though they had been strange and ominous events. At length her kind and gentle

friend spoke as a tender mother would have done to the daughter she loved, and besought her to disclose the cause which was thus alienating her from the sympathies of all around. For some minutes Edith struggled with her emotion, but in vain ; she could only throw herself into the arms of her friend, and yield to the passionate overflow of feelings, taxed almost beyond endurance.

At length she looked up, and the glow and the smile which shone through her tears told that a tale of happiness lay hid beneath this shrouded mystery. "Soon, very soon, all will be told," said she, as her bosom heaved with emotion ; "and oh, may your heart be strengthened to bear it even as mine has been ! But do not—do not ask me more." Mrs. Malcolm had too much delicacy to press the subject further. But she mused and pondered on these strange words, vainly seeking to elucidate their import.

A few days after this, as Edith sat at breakfast with the family party, a letter was brought to her, which a glance told was fraught with the tidings she had so long panted to tell. With a heart throbbing with emotion, yet unable to articulate, she hastily rose, and with trembling limbs sought the privacy of her own chamber, ere she ventured to open it, and it was through a mist of blinding tears she traced its contents.

"Now, dearest Edith, the time is come when I may claim you as my own ! To-morrow I shall be

at Inch Orran ; to-morrow I shall again behold the dear ones I so madly deserted. The concealment of nine long years will be at an end. But oh ! how dearly bought has this happy day been to all ! With what shame I now disclose the wild act of boyish romance which has so long divided us ! Nine years ago I returned a shipwrecked sea-boy to my home ; but I learnt that my return would bring only poverty and ruin on all I loved. I saw them seemingly happy. I believed myself forgotten, and I resolved to sacrifice myself to the continuance of the happiness and prosperity of others. I fled far from all I loved. In my delirium I even rashly, impiously, bound myself by a solemn vow never to reveal myself till the period arrived when I could give them a right to all the possessions they then enjoyed, but of which my return at that time would have stripped them. 'Tis to you, Edith, I commit my cause, to plead for me with the dear parents I so cruelly injured, by breaking the holy tie which should have bound me to them. But they will forgive me—you will be the link again to unite us. To your hands, then, I commit myself ; to your discretion I trust the communication. Oh, how my heart has pined for this time, and how it feels overwhelmed at the very thought ! My mother ! pray for her, pray with her ; and pray, too, my first, my only love, for your

"To-morrow! Was it indeed so near?" And how prepare their hearts for the tide of joy which was

about to rush in upon them? How call upon them to give up the dead which had so long lain shrouded there, and receive in exchange the living to their arms? Oh no! it was not possible to prepare them for such a transition. It was by no slow and gradual light the truth could be learned. One single ray must flash instantaneous conviction on their souls. It was this consciousness which had hitherto restrained her from all attempts at a gradual disclosure. If the idea once took possession of the mind, with naught to feed and sustain it but a baseless hope and vague surmise, it could only serve to fever and disturb the imagination. Better it were that nothing should be hinted till all could be told. But she must first still the tumult of her own heart, that she might find gentle access to those of others. While yet unable to compose her spirits sufficiently to venture on the allotted task, a gentle tap at the door was followed by the entrance of Mrs. Malcolm, who, struck by the agitation of Edith's manner, and alarmed at her protracted absence, came to be satisfied if all were well. She looked with earnest inquiry on Edith's eloquent countenance, where all was struggling to reveal itself.

"Edith," said she, taking her hand, "your spirit seems strangely stirred. If it is with joy, you will surely share it with me. If it is grief or anxiety, will you not suffer me to share it with you?"

"Oh! it is something that differs from all," replied Edith, with emotion. "It *is* joy; but joy so strange —so—"

Mrs. Malcolm looked at her with surprise. "It seems indeed strange that *any* joy should have such an effect upon you."

"No—oh no! You would not say so if you knew—if you could guess." Her heart throbbed violently, and her colour went and came with the quickness of lightning.

"Then, will you not tell me, my love, what it is that thus strangely moves you?" said her friend soothingly.

After a struggle to repress her feelings, Edith succeeded. She became perfectly calm, but very pale, as she said, "Do you remember when once we talked of happiness? I knew not then what it was, but I believed you happy." She stopped.

"Well, my love?" inquired Mrs. Malcolm in a tone of surprise.

"You said you were not," resumed Edith, in a low, suffocated voice; "that wandering thoughts, wild dreams of of one of"

"Of my Ronald?" said Mrs. Malcolm, mournfully. "Yes, long—too long—I struggled with the mingled feelings of despondency and hope and fear."

"You believed that he had perished?" said Edith, once more regaining her composure.

"At the end of thirteen years could you wish me to doubt it?" said Mrs. Malcolm, almost reproachfully.

"But you did once hope, even while you feared."

Mrs. Malcolm sighed. "But now the hope and the fear are even as he is—no more!"

"Hope never dies, it is said," rejoined Edith with a beating heart.

Mrs. Malcolm waved her head sorrowfully, and a sigh was her only answer.

"At least it may revive—return. With God all things are possible ; He can loose the prisoner's bonds ; He can set the captive free ; He can recall the dead to life ;—oh ! He can make even the seas give up their dead !"

Struck with the trembling fervour of her tones, for a moment Mrs. Malcolm regarded the deep, glowing expression of Edith's countenance; then, as the sudden conviction flashed upon her, she wildly exclaimed, "My son ! Oh, do not mock me !—say——"

Edith opened her arms to receive her, and, while tears of rapture streamed from her eyes, she faintly articulated, "He lives !"

The mother uttered no cry—shed no tears ; she stirred not—breathed not ; but every fibre seemed as if stiffening into stone, while with pale lips, and fixed but vacant eye, she gazed wistfully upon Edith, as though she looked on some fearful and delusive thing.

"Will you not shed one tear, breathe one word of thanks to God ?" said Edith soothingly.

"For what ?" inquired Mrs. Malcolm fearfully, as she laid her trembling hand on Edith's.

"For Ronald, who lives, and comes to bless and be blessed by you !"

At length the mother's tears did flow, and the fer-

vent ejaculation broke from her lips ! Then she called eagerly for her husband, for the dear partner of all her joys and sorrows, to share in the blest tidings ; and Edith left them to the overflow of feelings too sacred for aught but the eye of Heaven to witness. Soon the joyful tidings spread, and everywhere they were received with rapture, for Ronald's name and memory had ever been fondly cherished far and near. Lucy, her husband, and two lovely children, were hastily summoned to complete the happy group that waited impatiently to welcome the wanderer's return. "To-morrow!—the blest to-morrow!—when, when would it come ! "

Hours crept slowly along—hours ?—years ! ages they seemed to those longing hearts, whose only cry was, "My son ! my son ! "

But these hours passed away, the day was drawing to a close, and now the evening was come, such an evening as that on which Ronald had torn himself from all he loved—calm, fair, and holy. There sat the mother even as then, the glorious firmament and the glowing waters spread out before her ; but her fervent eye was fixed with unvarying gaze on the going down of the sun, as though she sought to hasten its tardy course by marking each lessening ray—that sun whose next rising was to form a new epoch in her existence. And Edith was by her, watching the course of a still distant boat, which was rowed swiftly along ; its course was directed to Inch Orran. With varying colour she marked its progress—nearer and nearer it

drew—it reached the point, and in an instant, with light step, one sprang on shore.

“ ‘Tis he !” she exclaimed, starting up.

“ ‘Tis Ronald ! Ronald is come !” was the glad cry which broke from every lip.

“ Eager steps the threshold pressing,
Open’d arms in haste advancing,
Joyful looks through blind tears glancing ;
The gladsome bounding of his aged hound,
Say he in truth is here ! our long, long lost is found ! ” *

But no such manifestations of delight came from the mother, as she was clasped in the arms of her son ; her joy was too deep for words or looks or outward tokens ; and long she remained unconscious of whose were the arms that supported her, whose the warm tears that dropped upon her pale cheek ! When at length by these fond cares recalled to consciousness, ah, what a gaze was that which dwelt upon those dear and cherished features ! Changed they might be to other eyes ; but the look, the one look of her own child,—what can efface that from the mother’s heart ? Still all seemed but as a dream, till, with his family and household assembled round him, she heard the father offer up to God his thanks for the recovery of his long-lost son—that the gift was acknowledged with tears of pious gratitude to Him, the giver of every good and perfect gift !

The Admiral kept his word—Lady Arabella and

* The Beacon.

he came to Inch Orran to witness the celebration of a Highland wedding. Benbowie also was forthcoming, in a waistcoat ten times more conspicuous than ever. "That was very true,—on my conscience, that was very true what you said of the grazings," said he to Mrs. Macauley, as though he had been ruminating on it ever since; "and I've brought a thousand pound for a tocher to Glenroy's daughter."

"Ah, Benbowie, that is like you; but 'deed you've been rather long of thinking of it, for Providence has been as kind to her as to the little bee that it feeds from dew and clouds; and now there's the sunshine and the flowers, and she wants for nothing."

The marriage of Ronald and Edith was blessed by the venerable Mr. Stuart; and the Admiral and Mrs. Macauley danced a Highland reel with great spirit in honour of it. Thus, when it was ended, she communed with her partner upon the event. "Oh, what curious creatures we are! To think if Glenroy was to look up, what would he say to see his dochter the wife of Ronald Malcolm after all! Not a bit but he was very near casting out with me once for *evenin'* her to such a thing! Oh, should not that make us humble and trustful, when it is shown to us poor, blind craaters that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps? And to see how beautifully it is appointed to us, as to the naatral creation, to have our tribulations and our consolations, if we would but look to the hand that sends them! for, as the old

Hieland distich says (but as you do not understand Gaelic, I must give it to you in English),—

“ There is neither knoll nor rising,
Nor yellow (green) grassy hillock,
That will not for a space of time be joyous,
And for a while be sad and tearful.” 23

THE END.





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Ferrier, Susan Edmonstone
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